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NEW STATESMAN

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The Tyranny of Politics

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Whose State of Israel?

Israel has not many friends left in the British press. The NEW STATESMAN is still generally (though by no means invariably by Israelis) numbered among them. We were frankly apprehensive at the time of Mr Begin's election last May and our forebodings have been amply fulfilled. If it is true, as President Carter's notes of his interviews with him certainly suggest, that the sole result of Mr Begin's Washington visit last week was to demonstrate total intransigence not only over Resolution 242 but also on the whole continuing question of settlements, then it is past time for plain speaking. Peace can never be attained in face of such obduracy; all Israel can count on achieving by the strategy she is currently following is the gratification of her enemies and the humiliation of her friends.

It is, of course, far easier to criticise from outside than from within; and, for that reason alone, especial credit must belong to Israel's television service for revealing last weekend that, even at a time when the Begin Government was pretending to negotiate with Egypt over Sinai, five *new* settlements were being secretly prepared deep in the desert. As Mr Shimon Peres, the leader of the Labour Alignment, caustically observed: 'In any well established state such a move would be sufficient to have Parliament vote the Government out.' His opening phrase, however, was a strange one – for, if anyone 'established' the State of Israel, it was not Mr Begin and his friends of the Irgun Zvai Leumi but Mr Peres's own forebears in the Labour Party.

A fortnight ago the NS commented that it was 'tragic' that just at the moment when Egypt seemed ready to hold out the hand of friendship, Israel should have chosen a man like Begin to lead it. But the tragedy goes beyond that – for it has taken until now for the Opposition in the Knesset even to begin to hint that there is 'another Israel': an Israel that does not derive its political imperatives from the mists of Biblical history and which (though haunted by the holocaust) does not automatically regard what happened in Europe over 30 years ago as the ready-made justification for all that has happened to Southern Lebanon over the past two weeks.

When it was launched, the attack on the belt of the Lebanon below the Litani River seemed, if not particularly wise, then at least – given the provocation – understandable. But it has now become clear that, quite apart from being an invasion rather than a raid, the whole operation was accompanied by an indiscriminate, wanton destruction reminiscent of nothing so much as the worst excesses of America in Vietnam. As Alexander Cockburn writes on p. 419, one effect of that has already been to alienate Mr Begin's Government from precisely the constituency in America on which Israel has traditionally been able to depend. Another has been – since he must bear at least titular responsibility for all that occurred – drastically to reduce the credibility and appeal of Mr Ezer Weizman as a possible alternative prime minister to Mr Begin. Whether his call for 'a national peace government' last weekend was intended as the beginning of a leadership *putsch* we may never know; but whatever its intention, its objective (even on the strictly limited coalition plane) does not, with Mr Begin welcomed back in triumph by both his Likud and DMC cabinet colleagues, hold out much hope of being fulfilled.

All of which must inevitably increase the responsibility that now rests on Mr Peres, Mr Allon, Mr Eban and the other leaders of the Alignment. They owe it to their own supporters, as much as to other socialists throughout the world, to demonstrate, in the aftermath of a diplomatic disaster and a military monstrosity, that Israel and intransigence are not necessarily synonymous terms. No doubt, the Alignment's defeat after 30 years in power last May was a severe psychological shock; but the answer to that rejection by the electorate can hardly lie in seeking to outdo Mr Begin in a 'rejectionist' stance now. The best service they could render to their country would be to speak up now for 'the other Israel' – an Israel that badly needs to find its voice.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Common Sense about Lobbies

'Now, let me introduce you to an MP,' said my colleague, showing me round Annie's Bar for the first time. He found one. We shook hands and were about to exchange civilities when something rather peculiar happened to the MP. He began to list – first sideways, then backwards, then sideways again. Then his bar-stool proved inadequate, and he fell slowly to the ground. It seemed to take him ages to fall. It was like a slow-motion shoot-out in a late Sixties film. When he had finally achieved the carpet he was picked up and helped to his room. I thought to myself: 'I'm not seeing this. I must not "see" anything in the private rooms and corridors of the Palace of Westminster. I am a guest of Parliament, and it has always been the rule that incidents, pleasant or otherwise, should be treated as private if they happen in those parts of the building to which I have access because my name is on the Lobby List. This rule is strictly enforced by the authorities. This rule is strictly . . .' 'I think we had better find someone else to talk to,' said my colleague.

The Lobby Rules have always held a certain charm for me: 'Do not run after a Minister or Private Member. It is nearly always possible to place oneself in a position to avoid this.' Presumably in the bad old days, whenever there was a sighting of an important Minister, a cry of 'View Halloo!' went up, and the whole pack of lobbymen went racing down the Ways and Means. The rule was no doubt introduced to protect such elder statesmen as had become a little shaky on their pins. Another rule: 'Do not crowd together in the Lobby so as to be conspicuous.' And: 'Do not crowd round the Vote Office when an important document is expected.' So serious a lobby correspondent was I that every time an important document was expected I made myself scarce.

But the most interesting feature of the rules was epistemological. The Oxford philosophers used to say that a statement was meaningful if it was susceptible of proof. The Lobby Rules, on the other hand, are ingeniously designed to ensure that no statement will be susceptible of proof. A policeman in court is encouraged to read from his notebook. But the lobbyman is told: 'Do not use a notebook, or, as a rule, make notes when in private conversation, in the Members' Lobby.' All journalists are supposed where necessary to protect their sources, but the lobbyman is supposed to make this his 'primary duty':

> Sometimes it may be right to protect your informant to the extent of not using a story at all. This has often been done in the past, and it forms one of the foundations of the good and confidential relationship between the Lobby and members of all parties.

'Good afternoon, Minister. Any good stories today?' 'Matter of fact, yes, we're going to war. But keep it under your hat, what?' 'Come, come, Minister, when have I ever used a story you gave me? Silent as the grave, that's my motto!' 'Well, I know. You're a credit to your paper, Fentiman. I don't think I've seen any story under your by-line for the last six months. I say, you haven't seen the PM around have you? There's an urgent message for him from the chiefs of staff.' 'Ho, ho, ho. You can't catch me out like that, minister. Do you think I "see" anything that goes on here . . .?' (North Korean storm-troopers sweep through the Lobby, chopping up members of all parties, disembowelling the sergeant-at-arms, crowding round the Vote Office.) '. . . pleasant or otherwise?' 'For Christ sake Fentiman, we've got to get out of here double quick. Follow me.' (Minister runs off down Ways and Means.) Fentiman: 'Ho, ho, ho. Trying to catch me out again. Imagine what the Lobby Committee would have to say if I was caught running after a Minister in the W-AAARGH!'

This, at any rate, is the way the Lobby is supposed to work. The most distinctive feature of the system, I suppose, is the regular meetings held in the special lobby room in which Mrs Thatcher, Michael Foot and Tom McCaffery brief the press on the current state of play. The fact that these meetings are held is supposed to be kept secret:

> Do not talk about lobby meetings BEFORE or AFTER they are held, especially in the presence of those not entitled to attend them. If outsiders appear to know something of the arrangements made by the Lobby, do not confirm their conjectures, or assume that, as they appear to know so much, they may safely be told the rest.

The wording of this rule makes it sound as if the lobbymen are made privy to the most extraordinary range of secrets. In fact, the only use of the system is to enable those who give the briefings to deny accurate press accounts of what they have said. Hence the row over the smearing of Sir Peter Ramsbotham, and hence, more recently, the ability of Mrs Thatcher to unsay some remarks on the honouring of Labour amnesties for illegal immigrants. When this happens, the lobby correspondent has no means of standing by his story without breaking the rules.

But for the most part the Lobby at Westminster works in the same way as lobbies all over the world, and it is only its institutionalisation that makes it so quaint. Lobbies exist around every great source of sensitive information – there was a lobby around Kissinger (no doubt there still is), American embassies run informal lobbies, our Foreign Office has a lobby, the TUC has a lobby, great industries will tend to have lobbies, etcetera. Lobbies begin as a convenience for specialist journalists. They become pernicious when those journalists give too much by way of a *quid pro quo*. But this is a problem endemic in journalism itself. (There is much speculation about whether this or that journalist is a spy. But any reporter who goes out into the field, returns to town, rings up an embassy, chats to a contact, says what he's seen, asks for background to help his story, is acting as a low-level spy. The real question about this or that journalist is: is he a *paid* spy?)

Suppose the Westminster Lobby were abolished. Suppose those supposedly non-existent briefings came to an end. Suppose the journalists who had access to the 'private parts' of the Palace of Westminster were able to work under exactly the same conditions as any other kind of reporter. Would there be that much difference? For a while one might notice an extra vividness in political reporting, but I think it would take a connoisseur to tell just what the change had been. The unattributed quotations would go on. The insiders would still protect their inside sources, and perform the same sort of favours for them in return. The political columnists would hardly change, since most of them are not members of the Lobby anyway. Overall, a formal system would be immediately replaced by an informal one.

But suppose the laws of secrecy were changed. Suppose the libel laws were changed. Suppose there was a genuine reform of the Official Secrets Act. Then indeed one would notice the difference at once. Lobbies thrive in secretive societies. In more open societies they would be bound to fade away. If English journalists look to America with envy, it is because there the process of transformation from a society in which information is regarded as a privilege into one in which information is regarded as a right has been so much more dramatic and swift than here. As I give up the privilege of being a guest of parliament, with the high and solemn responsibilities that that has entailed, (the non-attributable halves of Fed, the off-the-record Scotch), it seems appropriate to note that the Government has no intention of fulfilling its manifesto pledge on Official Secrets: that they do not intend to introduce legislation this session, and that, if returned to power, they will be in no hurry to do anything about the Act then.

Down the hatch!

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Alexander Cockburn

Mr Begin Bombs in Washington

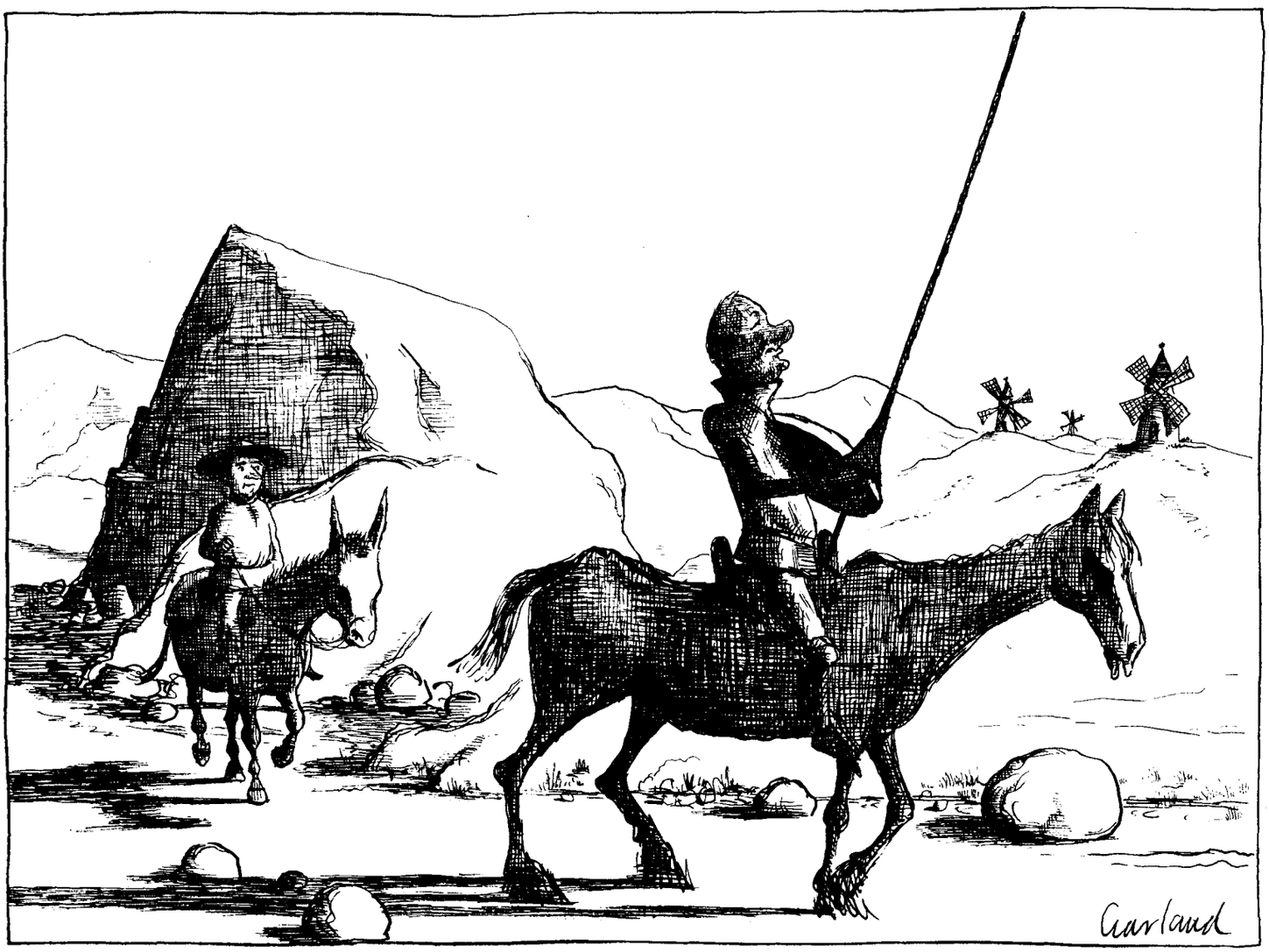
The day after Prime Minister Begin left the United States last week, following the abortive encounter with President Carter in Washington, the *Washington Post* ran a front-page report from its correspondent in Lebanon. Beneath the headline 'Vietnam-style raids gut Southern Lebanon: Israel leaves a path of destruction' the article began:

> From the slopes of Mount Hermon in the east to the heights overlooking Tyre in the west, the Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon has left a broad path of death and widescale destruction unprecedented in the region south of the Litani River. The scope and sweep of the damage here makes a mockery of Israeli claims to have staged surgical strikes against Palestinian bases and camps. It is clear that the Israelis have used the same tactic as the Americans used in Vietnam: concentrated and heavy firepower and air strikes to blow away all before them – be they enemies or civilians – in order to hold down their own casualties.

In a national press so traditionally pro-Israel as that of the United States it is really rather startling to read such blunt reportage. And the fact that the editors of the *Washington Post* had no hesitation in running it on their front page is some indication of the slippage in Israeli public relations in the US since the invasion of Southern Lebanon. Nor was the *Washington Post*, traditionally an extremely pro-Israeli newspaper, alone. *Time*, discussing the original PLO raid said: 'The bloody massacre . . . may have been as much the result of Israeli incompetence as Palestinian menace . . . The police commander at the roadblock gave a blanket open-fire order to terrified traffic cops, and their wild fusillade when the bus was finally halted probably killed more hostages than did the terrorists.' *Time* simultaneously suggested that 'deliberate counter-terror' seemed to have prompted massive Israeli assaults on the 'civilian dwellings' in Lebanon.

Such analysis contrasted strongly with the editorial thunderings before the Israelis launched their attack. Characteristic was an editorial in the *New York Daily News*, the largest circulation daily in the country: 'The wanton, senseless shedding of blood will continue – inflicting wounds on Arabs and Israelis alike – until the PLO is crushed or brought to heel.' Six days later, when 250,000 refugees were fleeing northward in Lebanon, the *New York Times* was still referring to the 'justified' Israeli retaliation, prompting Anthony Lewis, one of the *Times*'s own columnists to dissent sharply, remarking that such a reprisal could only be called justified 'if Arabs are less human than the rest of us.'

In the midst of these ebbs and flows of opinion Prime Minister Begin arrived. Until the PLO raid his position had been steadily eroding in the United States. Privately many leaders of major American Jewish organisations were deploring his policy. 'Privately',



. . . Don Quixote replied: 'You know, my friend Sancho Panza, that it was a custom much in use among knights errant of old to make their squires governors of the isles or kingdoms they won; and I am determined that, for my part, so beneficial a custom shall not lapse. On the contrary. I intend to improve on it: For they often, perhaps most often, waited till their squires were grown old; and when they were worn out in their service, from bad days and worse nights, they gave them some title of count, or perhaps marquis, of some valley or province of more or less importance. But if you live and I live, it may well be that before six days are gone by I may win some kingdom with others depending on it, and one of them may prove just right for you to rule. Do not think this any great matter, for adventures befall knights errant in such unheard and unthought-of ways that I might easily be able to bestow on you even more than I promise.' 'At that rate,' said Sancho Panza, 'if by any of these miracles your worship speaks of I were to become king, Juana Gutierrez, my popper, would be queen, no less and my children princes.' 'Well, who doubts it?' answered Don Quixote. 'I doubt it,' replied Sancho Panza . . .

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though, remains the operative word for American Jewish opinion, at least where it counts politically. To this hour no major spokesman, outside Jewish Senators in Congress, has publicly reprimanded Begin or at least dissented in any harsh fashion from his intransigent posture. Nonetheless the strains are evident, and telephone calls to prominent American Jews elicit discreet prophecy that 'soon' the criticisms will surface. Time and time again, in discussing the situation with generally liberal-minded American Jews one hears the gloomy admission that after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November last year Israel could no longer be one-dimensionally perceived and promoted as the 'good' country, that although Carter had made enough blunders over the last year to reunite the American-Jewish community at crucial moments it was now clear that the comfortable position of attacking only the Administration for its insensitivity to Israel's needs was no longer tenable.

In the Congress Senators Javits and Ribicoff, both Jews, have been publicly critical of the Israeli government's posture, and the respite afforded by the PLO raid was only of three or four days' duration. The immensity of the Israel response had become evident by the time Begin reached Washington. He addressed a private meeting of Senators in Congress and, as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, one of the participants later remarked: 'The only person smiling at the end was Jim Abourezk.' James Abourezk of South Dakota is the only Senator of Arab descent.

Certainly not smiling, at the conclusion of his meeting with Begin was the President himself. And the lack of such a farewell smile to an Israeli Prime Minister is almost as of much significance as the failure to agree on a communiqué at the end of the talks. The political stakes for the President are, of course, very large. The resignation of Mark Siegel, the White House's liaison with the American Jewish Community, shortly before the Begin visit had been a blow, and furthermore a portent of a perilous fight on the package sales of jets to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel.

This package, particularly the 60 highly sophisticated F-155s to Saudi Arabia, is the most conspicuous example of US pressure on Israel to soften its stance. The fight in Congress – which could stop the sale – will get going at the end of April after the Panama Canal treaties are finally voted on. And even those dubious about Begin's policy on the settlements and Resolution 242 proclaim their vehement opposition to the linked sales. 'You don't punish Israel,' went one representative comment to me 'by supplying our most modern aircraft to our most medieval ally – just to persuade Begin he is being unreasonable.'

The fight is one that the Administration is reluctant to have on its hands – and one into which it has been pushed by Begin's stance and – behind this – by Sadat's 'sacred mission' which initially caused Carter and his advisers such merited trepidation. Until last week Carter was persuaded, by temperament as well as by his advisers, to treat Begin gently. Indeed, Begin was not so far off the mark when he claimed that in December his own peace proposals had received a pleasant response in Washington. Even last week Carter was suggesting compromises – some for continued Israeli military presence on the West Bank – which any previous Israeli government would have snapped up. But Begin left absolutely no room for manoeuvre.

Whether or not – as has been reported in Israel – a 'high American official' actually said as much, the Administration would dearly love to see Begin shunted aside. Much, probably excessive, hope is placed in the dubious person of Ezer Weizman, Minister of Defence who is believed here to get on well with Sadat. Meanwhile there is much, rather unsubstantiated talk of subterranean US pressure on Israel, schism and alarm among American Jews and the probability that general support for Israel in the US as a whole is perceptibly, though not yet decisively, on the wane.

Washington

Roger Omond

Jimmy Kruger's Catchment Area

Last weekend an attractive widowed mother of two young children 'celebrated' an anniversary that is fast becoming more common in South Africa: seven months of detention without trial. Nohle Mohapi is one of 300-odd people who have disappeared into a limbo controlled by the Special Branch. She was not seen by her family and friends for five and a half months after her detention on 25 August last year. Six weeks ago her detention order was changed from the Terrorism Act to the slightly less restrictive Internal Security Act under which she is at least allowed some visitors. One of the few certainties about South Africa today is that she is not guilty of any offence.

Apart from having a husband and friends with the wrong political beliefs, of course. Her huband is dead: Mapetla Mohapi was the 24th South African known to have died in Special Branch custody. Also dead is the man for whom she used to do private typing, Steve Biko, who was the 45th (by most counts) detention-without-trial victim. Thirteen months separated those two deaths: although the fatality toll took 13 years to reach 24, it took just over a year to get to 45. A week after Biko was detained for the last time, Nohle Mohapi was picked up as well. She was held for about 150 days in Port Elizabeth where she fell under the control of Colonel Pieter Goosen, the man in charge of Biko's final days.

Nohle Mohapi is perhaps the most chilling example of how relatively unpoliticised people can get caught in the Special Branch web. She married a young social worker some years ago and the couple had two children. Her husband was detained, released, banned, harassed and then detained again, to be found hanged (said the police) from the bars of his cell. He was never charged but his 'crime' was involvement in the Black Consciousness Movement. Nohle was committed but not deeply involved – much of the time she was concerned with earning a living for the family.

Then in August 1976 her husband died in detention. Nearly a year later an inquest court delivered a 'no blame' finding that was to be echoed five months later at the Biko inquest. Nohle was working then as secretary to the Black Community Programmes in King William's Town. She and her solicitors decided to sue Police Minister Kruger for £30,000 damages over her husband's death. A month later she was detained. Only the Special Branch (and possibly Kruger) knows why she was held for 150 days under the Terrorism Act rather than the Internal Security Act which at least allows some visiting 'privileges', access to a solicitor, the right to receive and send letters, food from outside and, most times, freedom from solitary confinement. A Terrorism Act detainee's sole 'rights' are a visit, possibly every fortnight, by a magistrate.

If she was released tomorrow, Nohle would find her home area of King William's Town a lonely place. Most of her friends are banned, banished or detained – some a combination of all three. One is Thenji Mtintso, detained within a few weeks of Mapetla Mohapi in 1976, badly beaten up according to her own testimony at the Mohapi inquest, released and then promptly banned and banished to Orlando East in Soweto. Mtintso, a *Daily Dispatch* reporter – the newspaper is paying her salary and will continue to do so until she is able to work again – is now in the Johannesburg Fort Prison under the ISA. She will not be charged with any offence.

Nor will Peter Jones, detained with Biko last 18 August, despite the Special Branch claim during the Biko inquest that he had

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confessed to having inflammatory pamphlets. A mere confession is not enough to bring a charge, according to Kruger. Jones's 'confession', the Special Branch said at the inquest, drove Biko 'berserk' and led to the fight during which the fatal injury was inflicted. The 'confession' is now to be quietly forgotten, presumably much to the relief of Advocate Riet van Rooyen, counsel for the police at the inquest. He introduced it as evidence explaining that Biko realised the game was up and had attacked his captors in a fit of fury. But there was a small problem: Jones's sworn statement had been signed only after Biko's death. Hastily retreating, Van Rooyen and the Special Branch then claimed that Biko had been shown an unsworn statement. Sworn or unsworn, the statement will not be used against Jones in any court case.

The Biko affair refuses to go away. Just the other week when Kruger was telling Parliament retired jurists would visit Terrorism Act detainees, the Minister of Police blundered yet again. Helen Suzman asked him whether he would also ensure that district surgeons who visited detainees would no longer have their instructions overruled by the Special Branch. Kruger termed her suggestion 'scurrilous' – yet the Biko inquest was told time and again that the two district surgeons who saw him were turned down flat by Colonel Goosen when they suggested hospitalising him. The doctors, Kruger, the Minister of Health and the Special Branch officers still have to face civil court proceedings over Biko's death and the doctors will be up before the Medical and Dental Council over their professional conduct one day.

Kruger still keeps his post and apparently still enjoys the confidence of Prime Minister Vorster, who admittedly these days has the more pressing problems of the future of Namibia and Zimbabwe on his mind. Few others feel the same way about the Minister of Police who in the past six months has managed to insult through verbal gaffes just about every group in South Africa bar his own: blacks, English-speaking whites, Greek and Portuguese immigrants and Coloureds. Certainly the bulk of the 240 people being detained at the year's end under the Terrorism Act, the 236 boys and 23 girls under the age of 18 detained in terms of one security Act or another in 1977, the 38 people house arrested without warning last year, the 120 under restriction order and the 60-odd Internal Security Act detainees do not share Vorster's confidence in Kruger. Some of the detainees have been brought to court and convicted; a few found not guilty and a number of others now face prosecution.

The Terrorism and Internal Security Acts detainees are there at the minister's discretion. Kruger has said that nobody now held under the ISA will be charged and that the orders expire on 10 August. Terrorism Act detainees can be held until they have answered questions to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Police. Pretoria is soon to have a new Commissioner, the former head of the Special Branch, General Mike Geldenhuys. He may take some satisfying.

East London

A Special Correspondent

Ghana's Answer to Politics

After more than six years of military rule, Ghana is about to return to a civilian administration. But there's a snag. It will be civilian administration without political parties. General Acheampong has finally been obliged to publish his timetable for the changes – a referendum this week, implementation of the new 'Union Government' on 1 July 1979 – but he has made it clear that he will have no truck with politics. The new constitution will guarantee the right of association, but will 'rule out the right to associate for the purpose of forming a political party'. The Westminster model, it is argued, has brought nothing but strife to Ghana. Much better to rely on traditional institutions based on consensus and a responsive hierarchy of chiefs and their councils. There will be a popularly elected parliament, but power will lie in the hands of an executive president and his cabinet of ministers. The ministers themselves will be excluded from parliament.

An extraordinary campaign has been mounted in order to sell these proposals. In January, for example, Mrs Claire Prophet, 'Messenger' of the lunatic fringe Californian Church, the Great White Brotherhood, flew into Ghana to give her blessing to the Union Government. She was followed by another American, the faith healer Dr Gerullo, who, after healing a few of the halt and blind, declared on the authority of Isaiah that General Acheampong's enemies would be confounded. While the enemies find it hard to get a hearing in the supposedly free debate on the new constitution, the friends are active throughout Ghana. New organisations are sprouting up all over the country – The Ghana Peace and Solidarity Council, the Ashanti Youth Association, the Organisers' Council, the Friends, the African Command, the Kumasi Youngsters' Club.

These movements are blatantly political, and the government-controlled mass media are vigorous in their support. The Kumasi Youngsters' Club is for the rich who have done well by, and done well out of, the Government. The Organisers' Council is made up of repentant ex-politicians who regale meetings with lurid tales of bloodshed in the bad old party-political days and with visions of the new Jerusalem when Ghana is 'one nation, one people, with one great destiny'. Other groups are formed from the unemployed. On his recent tour of the Upper Region, General Acheampong's motorcade was preceded by a posse of Peace and Solidarity 'youngmen' on new Japanese motorcycles. Their uniform – tee-shirts emblazoned with Acheampong's portrait. The Peace and Solidarity Council is the most widely publicised of the groups. It is rumoured that the bulk of Ghana's meagre production of locally assembled cars is reserved for their use.

What is the purpose of these groups? In September last year the Professional Bodies Association attempted to hold a symposium at which a number of speakers were to have delivered lectures critical of the Union Government proposals. After protracted negotiations and covert obstruction, a police permit was eventually granted. The meeting was immediately broken up by Peace and Solidarity thugs.

Violence of this sort has now become a central feature of Ghana's political life. The army has so far kept a low profile, but the police have acted on a number of occasions against opponents of Union Government with a total disregard for law. On 13 January, while Acheampong addressed a military parade in Accra to celebrate the sixth anniversary of the Revolution (i.e. military rule), students at the three universities held peaceful demonstrations on their campuses. At the University of Ghana, Legon, eight miles from Accra, students burnt an effigy of Acheampong.

There is little doubt that they provoked riot police but police retaliation, aimed at rescuing a colleague taken as a hostage after a student leader had been arrested, was, to say the least, excessive. Armoured cars raced onto the campus and students, lecturers and university workers were indiscriminately clubbed. Tear gas was hurled, university and private property was destroyed and looted, and girl students were stripped naked and abused. At the Advanced Teachers Training College in Winneha, a dawn police raid on the campus was accompanied by rape and severe beatings, and at least one student, a Gambian, has been reduced to a vegetable state after falling from the third floor of a hall of residence. The University of Ghana is de facto closed.

On 27 January a new anti-Union Government group, the People's Movement for Freedom and Justice, was launched in Accra. This is a strange mixture of opposition elements, Marxists on the one hand and, on the other, conservatives who fear that Acheampong is coming under the influence of Soviet Russia. Not surprisingly, the Government has done its best to blacken the names of the group's leaders. Nevertheless in Kumasi, Ghana's second city, large crowds gathered on 4 February to cheer two of them on their way to a public meeting. The meeting had to be abandoned because, by strange coincidence, it coincided with one held by Union Government supporters. The crowd was dispersed with tear gas and a couple of bus-loads of thugs. At least three people were reported shot dead by the police. The People's Movement has accused Acheampong of embarking on a phoney constitutional exercise in order to divert attention from the serious economic crisis facing the country. The General has announced that Ghanaians can expect massive shipments of consumer items in the next few weeks. Bread and circuses may win the referendum, but Ghana's problems will remain.

Accra

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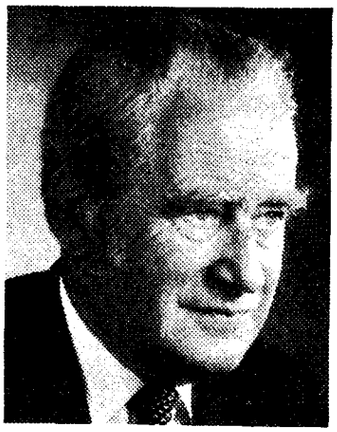
Midland Bank-Report 1977:



"Our performance in 1977 reflects the advantages we are gaining from being a Group which provides a wide range of financial services in an increasing number of world markets."

The Rt. Hon. Lord Armstrong of Sanderstead,
Chairman, Midland Bank Limited.

Pre-tax profit up from £166·4m to £192·8m

After providing for taxation, minority interests and extraordinary items, the net profit attributable to shareholders was £82.5m. as against £71.7m. The improvement in pre-tax profits was achieved in a year of falling interest rates and in a generally depressed economy with only a modest demand for borrowing in the U.K.

Treasury consent to 15% dividend increase

Total dividends for 1977 will amount to 14.75p per share (against 12.62p in 1976) equivalent, with the associated tax credits, to 22.35p per share compared with 19.42p per share for 1976.

Rights issue raises £96·4 million

Continued expansion of the Midland Bank and its subsidiaries creates the need for a further strengthening of the Bank's capital base. The recent £96.4 million rights issue comes after some US $300 million has been raised in the last two and a half years in the eurocurrency market.

Total advances increase

1977 saw the Midland increase its share of the banking sector's sterling advances, with manufacturing industry, the traditional base of the Bank's business, showing the greatest gain. Industry, however, remained reluctant in 1977 to take up total agreed facilities. The Bank's willingness to provide funds, even at the finest rates, is of little avail without a strong underlying demand in the economy and stable conditions so that customers have the confidence to commit themselves to expansion programmes.

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Finance for smaller businesses

A feature of 1977 has been the general recognition of the importance of small businesses to the economy as a whole. The Midland is well placed to assist this sector.

Further expansion overseas

The Bank's International Division has enjoyed a further expansion in foreign currency lending and has consolidated its market share. An important factor in developing this side of the Midland's business has been the additional investment in business abroad and continued extension of overseas representation. In 1977, offices were opened in Cairo, Madrid and Manila while the Tokyo office is due to be upgraded to a full branch in April 1978.

Specialised finance

Although the overdraft is the traditional form of the Bank's lending, and still remains the most used method of borrowing, constant efforts have been made over the years to adapt services to the changing needs of customers. In particular, there has been a pronounced move from short-term lending to specific medium-term finance and, more recently, to the provision of equity finance.

The Nationalisation Debate

The Bank joined the other London and Scottish banks in sponsoring a publicity campaign designed to increase public awareness that the Labour Party had formally adopted plans to nationalise the largest four clearing banks. During the campaign over 50,000 members of the public accepted the invitation to write in expressing a view on the issue. 90% were opposed to nationalisation.

A loyal worldwide staff

The Group now employs almost 65,000 people around the world and it is through their efforts and skill that we have earned a reputation which we believe to be second to none.

1977 Group Results in Brief

	£000's
Profit before taxation	192,830
Taxation	104,915
Attributable profit (after extraordinary items and minority interests)	82,470
Shareholders' dividends	20,066
Retained profit	62,404

If you would like a copy of Lord Armstrong's full Statement and the Report for 1977, please write to:– The Secretary, Midland Bank Limited, Head Office, 27 Poultry, London EC2P 2BX.

Midland Bank Group

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Gerry Fowler*

Non-University Higher Education

'We recognise that all of us have as the result of our discussions changed our initial views and come closer to the views expressed by others.' So say the Working Group on the Management of Higher Education in the Maintained Sector, better known as the Oakes Committee, which reported last week. It is a significant sentence. For if the British genius is for compromise, this Report is both very British and a work of genius.

The Group, under the chairmanship of Gordon Oakes, the Minister of State at DES, was set up at the beginning of last year in order to devise measures for improving the management and control of higher education in local authority colleges, and its co-ordination with higher education in the universities. Strictly speaking, its remit did not cover those colleges which receive grant-aid direct from DES, such as the 'voluntary' (mainly church) colleges of education. But it is not too inaccurate to say that its task was to take a fresh look at how higher education outside the universities is planned, managed, and above all financed.

There are over 400 colleges in England and Wales running higher education courses. Until 1975 they were sharply divided into those which provided teacher education, and the rest. Since then, as a consequence of mergers and diversification in the teacher training sector, they have all operated under the Further Education Regulations. They range from polytechnics offering mainly degree courses to local colleges of further education with but one or two part-time Higher National Certificate courses. A few still offer entirely home-grown courses leading to awards validated by the college itself, but most courses, although internally devised, are vetted and approved by an external validating body – sometimes a university, but more commonly the Council for National Academic Awards, or the Technician or Business Education Council. On the Government's present projections, they will by 1981/2 contain 250,000 higher education students, compared to the universities' 310,000.

In theory, each local education authority 'maintained' its own colleges, receiving no central assistance beyond the normal Rate Support Grant. In practice, all LEAs collectively finance the colleges belonging to each of them, insofar as they run higher education courses. The cost of such work is 'pooled': that is to say, divided among all LEAs, according to a formula which to the casual observer seems to make very little sense – 69 per cent of the cost is allocated on the basis of the school population of each authority, and 31 per cent on the basis of non-domestic rateable value. The latter element is supposed to reflect the utility of 'technical' education to industry and commerce in particular, although, as Oakes points out, the products of public sector higher education are now to be found in every form of employment, and not least public administration.

The fundamental weakness of this Byzantine system is obvious. Everyone spends what everyone else pays. It is as if each of us could draw from each other's bank accounts. There is, therefore, no financial incentive to efficient management. Add to that a procedure for course approval which entails the examination of each new proposal by the local authority, a regional advisory body, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) – but does not provide for its consideration as part of the college's total programme. Add, again, the possibility that a course already running may be cut short at the behest of the Inspectorate if it fails to recruit a prescribed number of students, irrespective of the resource implications. Throw in a system of institutional government which embodies the possibility, or even likelihood, of role confusion between the local authority, the governing body, the Principal, and the internal Academic Board. The justification for the appointment of the Oakes Group is clear.

There is an inescapable tension between the academic and financial autonomy of the college, the rights of the local authority which built and owns it, the financial responsibilities of all local authorities collectively, and the need for national co-ordination of the higher education system. Most full-time and sandwich courses meet a national or at the least a regional need. But initiative in providing them rests with a locally situated and managed institution. The present system of 'course approval' is designed to control and restrain that initiative, but not to stimulate it. The present system of financing is, by contrast, the abnegation of control and restraint, encouraging only profligacy. The tension is thereby increased.

Some urged Oakes to adopt a 'localist' solution to the problem. 'Maintaining' LEAs would, indeed, maintain higher education within their colleges, but would recoup from their home authorities the cost of educating students coming from outside their area. Whether the true cost of a course were charged, or a nationally agreed fee, that would be a system which would introduce financial discipline – with a vengeance. In the former case, the home LEA would be bound to steer students to the cheapest available course in the subject, and in the latter maintaining authorities would insist that colleges pruned away courses which cost more than the norm, and imposed a consequential burden on the ratepayers. Either way, it would be cheaper and, therefore, preferable for LEAs to encourage their young people to get their higher education in universities, which are largely funded by central government.

Rejecting this course, Oakes adopts what is in essence a 'centralist' position. There should be a new 'National Body' (Oakes's name, not mine), composed of representatives of the local authorities, the Secretary of State, and of institutional interests, in roughly equal proportions. Its members, once nominated or appointed, should look only to the national interest, not to that of the group each in some sense 'represents'. They will advise the Secretary of State and the local authority associations on the total sum required for higher education in the maintained sector, with a sum fixed for one year only, but with indicative planning figures for a quinquennium. That sum will then be allocated to colleges running higher education courses on one of three bases.

First, support may be given on a *per capita* system, so that the more students a course recruits, the more money a college receives. This system clearly provides a powerful disincentive to colleges and authorities to run uneconomic courses, recruiting few students. Second, the National Body may decide to support a course rather than the students on it; this provides a safeguard for minority, but nationally necessary or desirable, courses. Third, it may, upon application by the LEA, approve a college's total higher education programme, and allocate a global sum for its support. Such a college could then vary its programme – but in the knowledge that the resources available to it were limited. There would thus be central funding of public sector higher education, with two major elements of management and control – financing and course approval – at last reconciled.

It must have been at this point that the voice of the local authority representatives on the Oakes Group asserted itself, for this is where compromise begins. In the first place, the sum nationally provided shall come not from central government grant, but from a continued, if perhaps modified, form of 'pooling'. The colleges shall remain local authority institutions and, to prove it, the local authorities collectively shall provide the money to finance higher education within them.

Second, if the local authority representatives on the National Body vote unanimously but are in a minority, they may insist that the disputed matter be referred to the Secretary of State for decision, after consultation with the local authority associations. Quite how the rights and privileges of local authorities are preserved by passing decisions to central government is beyond my comprehension – but that is the burden of the argument.

Third, as a further token of local authority responsibility for higher education in the colleges, each maintaining LEA shall directly bear a proportion of the estimated cost of the course or the programme. Initially, this will be 5 per cent, then 10 per cent, and then possibly, after a pause for reflection, 15 per cent. Since local autonomy must never be preserved at the cost of imposing an unpopular burden upon the ratepayers, arrangements must be devised by the National Body to protect those authorities which would otherwise suffer disproportionately from this change. (Just how inconsistent can one be?)

Such a system would give every LEA an

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incentive to ensure that higher education in its colleges ran at less than its estimated cost. While the report suggests that any savings accruing, or a proportion of them, might be carried over in the college budget for the following year, few working in local authority higher education will believe that this would normally be permitted to happen. Nor could a college count on escaping through an apparent loophole in the recommendations – that, for some institutions, the National Body might become the 'funder of last resort' rather than the local authority, making good deficiencies and retaining savings in real as opposed to estimated expenditure. For the initiative for any such change must come from the maintaining LEA.

The rest of the Group's recommendations are unexceptionable, if vague. They recognise, for example, the need for a clearer definition of roles in institutional management – but hardly provide it. They urge universities to collaborate in regional planning of higher education – without giving any advice on how to trap the rogue elephants which refuse. But the fundamental weakness of the report is that its centralist philosophy has been amended to accommodate localist elements quite incompatible with it. Compromise is often a virtue. But on occasion there is no substitute for the hard-headed, even ruthless, exercise of choice between alternatives.

James Cameron

Old Soldiers

When it was put about, some short time ago, that Malcolm Muggeridge and I were to do a sort of double-act on the television, the gossiper of the *Sunday Times* said wistfully that he dearly wished these old journalists would simply fade away. If he saw the programme that night he might well have considered that this was just what we had done, some hours earlier.

He would have been very wrong; Malcolm Muggeridge and I greatly improve with age, at least we think so. We must have been terrible prigs and bores when we were younger; we probably still are a bit, but not to one another. I mature in bottle, Malcolm matures *sans* bottle. What he keeps on saying is that he wants to mature in casket.

As I recall our little public episode, we went on a great deal about death, which may not be Light Entertainment in the strictest sense, but at least has the advantage of fairly general application. Malcolm Muggeridge keeps saying how he longs for death, beaming with delightful anticipation; what *fun* it will be, all this delicious disintegration! I am sure he believes it, but he does not kid me. He looks forward to dying so eagerly that he is in honour bound to delay it indefinitely, since it will be such an eager pleasure that he must in conscience refuse to indulge it. The Grim Reaper is going to have a hell of a job with Mr Muggeridge. It is people who do not want to die who do die. Brother Malcolm, I am happy to say, will have to deny himself the fleshly satisfaction of mortality as he denies himself all the others. Hard luck, no doubt, on Malcolm Muggeridge; good news for us.

This Sunday paper columnist wished that old journalists would follow the example of old soldiers. I sympathise with his impatience, without altogether sharing it. I am personally somewhat fonder of old journalists than of new ones. Far too many of the codgers have indeed faded away, either to that Great Newsroom In The Sky where a shirt-sleeved Saint Peter hands out rotten little items to be subbed for eternity by Geoffrey Dawson and J. L. Garvin and C. P. Scott and Arthur Christiansen, or to sad little suburbs in Surrey where the deadlines die of dullness and editions are at rest.

I suppose I am one of the few old hacks who has not the slightest nostalgia for the Street of Ink. It is not the case, as many of my less kind friends say, that I could well afford to be casual about it, since mostly I worked from a cablehead a thousand miles away. Before I was paroled into the open air some 35 years ago I did a bellyful of porridge behind those closed doors. I was everything from a cuttings-carrier to a cartoonist, caption-writer to columnist. I even briefly became deputy chief sub-editor of the World's Greatest Newspaper', a job which so lowered me into a sense of nightmare inadequacy that as I slunk up from Blackfriars station to clock in of an evening I would seriously contemplate throwing myself under a No 11 bus to break a leg and thus postpone the ordeal of the night. I was deterred only by the consideration that I might equally break my goddam neck, which in those days I valued more than I do now.

So the life of journalism was not for me by any means the long days of wine and roses, very much otherwise. Even when in the 1940s I escaped into the comparative freedom of a foreign correspondent it had to be for two decades into a world even more confused and senseless than Fleet Street itself; if it was not one dispiriting war it was another, which was all very well for the camera cowboys, whom I properly respected for their stony and unregarding courage, but which for us was long boredom punctuated by intervals of total terror. That, I reckoned, was not my scene. I bore easily, and terrify even more easily. Both conditions, it seemed to me, cloud the judgment.

I could fain have started again reporting cattle-shows, but I know nothing of cattle. I knew a bit about the fringe of politics – not much, but then nobody knew very much. Political journalism was a con job anyhow. I could occasionally get away with a small piece about a minor coup in a small district of Outer Mongolia, but the market was limited. There were times when I thought of abandoning the whole tiresome trade and going in for something more immediately rewarding, like robbing banks.

These considerations I have often debated with Malcolm Muggeridge, usually with singular accord. Because we have accepted differences on doctrinal matters people like to set us up as antagonists on things like God, the afterlife, original sin, and the like. They hope for some wild row about heaven or hell. They wholly misunderstand the characters of literate old professionals who have known each other for a long time and who consequently unquestioningly accept that one man has a God and the other hasn't and no shenanigans. Anyhow, if the BBC wanted a semantic punch-up with us they didn't get it. There were complaints laterwards that the whole thing had been a load of shadow-boxing. That struck me as strictly unreasonable: when you are discussing the consequences of death, and so forth, what else are you boxing with but shadows? What were we supposed to do, kill each other on camera, to make the final point? And what would that have proved?

'Death will be an ecstasy,' said Malcolm as merrily as a schoolboy awaiting a birthday present. 'It cannot come too soon'. Inadvertently I broke in: 'Please, Malcolm, not for a couple of hours; we have to finish a programme.' 'But of course,' he said reproachfully, 'dear boy, I didn't mean *immediately*.'

I like – rather presumptuously, perhaps – to think of Muggeridge and myself as complementary halves of a journalistic generation. It is true he has about 11 years seniority, but in these days that makes no difference. Our dividing factor – very oddly considering Malcolm's metaphysical certainties and my earthbound doubts – is that of future hope. After long consideration (for he is not an impulsive man) Malcolm Muggeridge has concluded that society is pretty well past redemption, that it is destined to its own inevitable decline, slow or fast as the case may be, and that any effort (oblique effort, that is, such as ours) to change that course of moral decay is a waste of time.

As time and events move on I admit that the temptation to agree with him grows sometimes quite strong. My only trouble is that I cannot think of any other way of going about my business, since one has to have *some* justification for this nonsense. Muggeridge has come to terms with an imperfect world; I, with diminishing assurance, hang on to the grains of small optimism. By and by, no doubt, we shall skip hand in hand through the pearly gates into the People's Republic of Anointed Humbugs. And if it is there, Malcolm will have won.

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Paul Johnson

The Tyranny of Politics

When De Montfort was crusading in the South of France against the Albigensians, and about to take a heretic city, he turned to his spiritual adviser, a Cistercian abbot, and asked him how his soldiers, who had orders to slaughter the Albigensians and spare the orthodox citizens, would be able to tell them apart. 'Oh, kill them all,' replied the Abbot, 'God will know his own.' I thought of this chilling response when I saw a TV film of an African village in Rhodesia, which had been burnt by the 'guerrillas'. Some of the children had been bayonetted, in the name of one man one vote. Which god would know his own there, amid the charred bones and tiny, twisted limbs? Is there some god of multi-racial justice to be appeased by this sacrifice of the innocent?

Throughout the ages, the zealots have trundled their juggernauts over humanity. Granted their premise, that it is possible not only to conceive of a detailed moral order but to enforce it, their nightmare logic flows, as the Marxists say, ineluctably. The end-result may be atrocious, and absurd; but the links in the chain of reasoning hold firm. We saw another case last year on TV – the image remains deeply etched on my memory – of a black police constable being stoned by white youths. These young men were members not of the National Front but of some extreme left-wing sect. Doubtless well-educated and articulate, after the modern fashion, for all I know they may, each one of them, have had degrees in sociology. They were there to stop an NF march. Since the police would not let them stop the march, for which legal permission had been given, they were fighting the police. And since the black was a policeman, they were hurling bricks at him. He looked very frightened, as well he might: no pack of Pharisees stoning an adulterous woman to death could have been more single-minded than this mob. They were swelling with self-righteousness and moral indignation. 'Why are you stoning that black man?' 'Because we believe in racial harmony.'

The history of mankind can be seen as a series of attempts to impose a moral order on our somewhat chaotic natures. In a sense this is not only right but admirable; the search for moral order is of the very essence of civilisation, even more crucial to its emergence than the building of cities. The mistake we constantly make is to construct a moral order which is far too detailed – and so open up for ourselves the savage pit of ideological conflict, into which we repeatedly tumble. The strategic error in the organising of society is to invest regulations which are mere matters of temporary expediency with the force of moral compulsion. This is the origin of totalitarianism.

The difficulty which our earliest civilised forebears faced was that they found it impossible to frame a code of law without religious sanctions. The earliest law-codes, of the Babylonian Hammurabi and the so-called Mid-Assyrian period, were deliberately put in a divine setting. They were sometimes very detailed, and the ferocity needed to enforce them was justified by the wrath of god aroused by infractions. On this Mesopotamian plinth the Hebrews built their great structure of theocratic jurisprudence. The ponderous law-codes of Leviticus and Deuteronomy are attempts to construct a real and actual moral order on earth, down to the last multi-coloured tassel on a high-priest's garment. Morals, economic necessity, political and social convenience are all hopelessly confused in these efforts to legislate a Utopia into existence. Moreover, they were presented not as collective wisdom, the deliberations of an assembly, but as divine revelation, part of a historicist unfolding of events, valid for all time and place. It says something for the lasting impact of this Hebraic moral order on mankind that, over 2,000 years after it had first reached written form, in 1531, the tranquility and concord of Renaissance Europe was broken by an argument between Henry VIII, based on Leviticus 19: 16-21, and Pope Clement VI, who defended Catherine of Aragon's marriage on the basis of Deuteronomy 15: 5, in Henry's eyes a much inferior text. Heads rolled, stake-fires burned in consequence.

Our glory is that we have always produced people who have revolted against the constrictions of these compulsory moral orders, and who have used the critical principle to bring about a drastic simplification. The desire to create Utopia by statute has come up against a libertarian ethic based upon a simple moral framework, the gaps being filled by the internal moral order created by the individual's own conscience. The totalitarian straitjacket imposed on the Jewish people by the law was challenged, in the 1st century BC, by a liberal rabbinical tradition, which culminated in the teaching of Jesus. The essence of his work was not only the simplification of the law but the insistence that the law's desirable essentials be promoted by the imaginative morality of an informed conscience. He might have put it, as J. S. Mill later did: 'No great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought.' Hence the 'new' man of whom St Paul wrote. His one major theological essay, the Epistle to the Romans, is determinist in one sense, but liberal in another. Paul was urging men to escape from the totalitarian theocracy of the law and find 'freedom in Christ'.

It is one of the tragedies of history that this new Christian liberalism, based on free will and conscience, was not married to the political and economic liberalism of the Roman Republic. The Romans were great empirical legislators, and they had the sense to impose only the essential framework of law on their complicated empire, throughout which goods, ideas, creeds and men of all races circulated freely. Alas, Christianity was married not to the liberal Rome of the 1st century AD but to the Byzantine oriental despotism of the 4th, an autocracy already committed to legalistic compulsion on an unprecedented scale, and a corporatist state in embryo. Christianity took on its colouration and ideological habits. From this developed the 'total Christianity' of the Dark and Middle Ages, a society in which every aspect of existence was provided for by authority in the most minute detail, and in which, in theory at least, God's Utopia was enforceable, by the evangelising church and its physical arm, the state. Thus the burden and straitjacket of the Jewish law was recreated in Christian form. The 13th century Bishop Grossteste of Lincoln, one of the finest and noblest diocesans of the Middle Ages, believed it his duty to visit every family in his diocese, if possible once a year, and ensure it was keeping Christ's law, infractors being dealt with in his courts. But even he could not carry out this plan; and Grosstestes were rare: the Middle Ages were saved from the worst totalitarian horrors by human weakness and the corruption of authority, just as Soviet Russia is humanised by the black market and the underground press.

Of course the danger of detailed Utopianism is that there can never be agreement on the details. The Albigensian crusade was essentially an argument over details. As the Middle Ages progressed, there were more details, and so more issues to be argued (and fought) about. One of the great merits of Erasmus is that, in the true tradition of Jesus, he sought to re-simplify Christianity. Christian peace and unity could be preserved, he argued, 'only if we define as little as possible'. 'All that is of faith should be condensed into a very few articles.' On many points 'everyone should be left to follow his own judgment'. Otherwise, 'the long war of words and writings will end in blows'. How right he was! The eirenic wisdom of Erasmus was brushed aside by the eager zealots. Theology expands to occupy the time of the theologians available to practice it; and there were a great many theologians in 16th-century Europe. Luther did not oppose Rome with simplicity: he opposed it with a different set of details. Calvin did not want to overthrow the totalitarian theocracy of medieval Christendom, merely to replace it with another of his own. Like Grossteste, he thought it essential to visit and inspect every home annually in his Geneva fief, and castigate backsliders. The Reformation was not a

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conflict between freedom and authority, but between rival authorities. Thus the long war of words and writings *did* end in blows, which lasted for a hundred years.

We stand aghast in disgusted wonderment at the Wars of Religion: how could Renaissance Man do such things? Many people were aghast at the time, but powerless to prevent the slaughter and savagery as the zealots took over. *'Surtout, pas trop de zèle!'* The cry may be Talleyrand's, but it echoes through the ages. Sensible men recognised, like Erasmus, that religious warfare was the product of too much definition. In the exhaustion that followed the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, lessons were learnt and the idea that private judgment should hold sway in large areas took root – and took root not only in the religious but in the civil sphere. 'The freedom of the subject is the silence of the laws,' noted Hobbes sagely. The moral order was threatened by anarchy but could also be destroyed by legislative overkill. Locke reintroduced the Erasmian concept of 'minimum Christianity' and added to it his own vision of the night-watchman state, in which the law protected life, property and a reasonable order but did not indulge in positive Utopianism. The law, moral and civil, merely held the ring, and within Renaissance Man was free to seek fulfilment, guided solely by the dictates of an informed conscience. If Christianity was reduced to a minimum, so was political action. The notion of religious liberalism corresponded to the developing notion of a liberal economy. Thus in the advanced society of the 18th century – England – man was left fairly free to believe and act. The invisible hand of the market controlled the external world of commerce and manufacture, and the invisible brain of the conscience controlled the moral individual. This unleashing of human genius and energy produced the great creative leap forward of the industrial revolution, and its related political concept, democracy.

The notion that mankind progresses most swiftly, and that the essentials of a moral order are most secure, when Utopianism is held at bay, is not one which appeals much to present-day opinion, though I believe (and hope) it is due for a revival. The pattern of history suggests that creative forces operate best in a framework of scepticism and indifference, rather than in one of enthusiasm and zealotry. A collective assent that little can be known for sure opens the road for the individual pursuit of truth – the surest way of finding it. The century 1750-1850, when the Wars of Religion were already deep in the past, and the Wars of Politics far in the future, was one of great creative power. The received wisdom of that age seems to me to have corresponded more closely to a just and sensible assessment of the human condition than that of most times, before or since. For the construction of a moral order must start with a recognition of the limitations of political (and religious) action. Perfection cannot be organised. Happiness cannot be planned or engineered. Even justice is an aim and an ideal, rather than an actual condition to be brought about by legislation. A society under the rule of law is a plausible, and attainable, objective. But a Just Society is a Utopia. The piecemeal solution may lack divine symmetry but there is about it a huge humanity. Not only is the best the enemy of the good: a totalitarian moral order is bound to be an enemy of justice, and so in the end destructive of order itself.

But the kind of society which produced Mill's *Essay on Liberty* did not and perhaps could not last, for its stripped-down, simplified framework of moral order permitted injustices which drove men to clamour for more details. There was a revulsion of opinion, and in the new climate Marx reintroduced the notion of a total society, governed in all its details by moral necessity. Of course this new Utopian society was in theory secular; but in the organising of human societies the distinction between religious and secular is at bottom false. The theocracies of antiquity were political states. The totalitarian states of today are the realisations of quasi-religious theories. Politics is the pursuit of religion by other means. It was that shrewd observer Junius who noted as early as 1769 that the fanatics who made the Wars of Religion possible had merely changed their occupation: 'There is a holy mistaken zeal in politics as well as in religion.' Marx thought himself a materialist; but he was at heart a Jewish prophet and eschatologist, with a historicist vision of human development derived from the Old Testament, and with a determinist plan to control and perfect human behaviour which was positively Deuteronomic in scope.

It was in the 1880s that clever men in large numbers began once more to argue about the details of the moral order. The Age of Politics had begun. The brief, sceptical period, which supervened after the end of the age of faith and the Wars of Religion, was dismissed as cruel, uncaring and selfish, an abdication of moral responsibility. Men again began to plan the regeneration and improvement of society down to the last detail, and in due course to enforce their moral wisdom. Inevitably this new 'war of words and writings' ended in blows too. I do not know how exactly to date the beginnings of the Wars of Politics – the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941, perhaps? – but they are plainly upon us, and there is no possible knowing when humanity will emerge from them. Will it be decades? Centuries? The desire to make men perfect by law and force is strong in mankind, and it is heedless of the lessons of history or even the dictates of common sense and experience. The human raw material of zealotry is always there, waiting to be conjured out of the mass by some religious or political charismatic. Where have all the monks gone? Why – they are with us yet, in political committee rooms all over the world. Where are the theologians of yesteryear? Flourishing mightily, thank you very much, on *Pravda* and the *People's Daily*, on *L'Humanité* and *Paese Sera*, on *Le Monde* and the *Guardian*.

And the martyrs, too: they, most of all, are with us still, and in ever growing numbers. As the Cuban 'enforcers' spread over Africa, like the Counter-Reformation Jesuits, sleepy tropical cities leap into horrific life and enact their own, secular Massacres of St Bartholomew. *A la*

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lanterne! – the cry of the savage Utopian through history. The newspapers show us photographs of black men hanged at the street-corners of Addis Ababa. They are labelled counter-revolutionaries. They might, with as much sense or justice, have been branded Albigensians, or supporters of Consubstantiation. Were these murdered Ethiopians conscious martyrs, dying for a belief like More or Michael Servetus? Or mere innocent victims of zealotry on the rampage? Plenty in both categories, I should think. But it is notable that the political juggernaut, as it trundles across entire countries, even continents, is far more prodigal of human life, and less discriminating in exacting it, than its religious prototype. In central Europe, tens of thousands died in the wake of Wallenstein's Catholic army. In South-East Asia today the victims of Marxist Utopianism number millions, perhaps tens of millions. They will never figure in a Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, any more than there can be a martyrology of Auschwitz; there are too many of them. And the vast majority simply have no idea why they are being killed. In a way, that is the most horrific thought of all.

Mrs Gandhi's Example

It would, however, be a mistake to see the new Tyranny of Politics simply in terms of its murdered victims. A totalitarian moral order is not merely a way of death; it is a way of life too. In Grossteste's Lincoln or Calvin's Geneva the most notable feature was not the persecution of dissidents but the daily oppression of ordinary people. Even outside the totalitarian structures of our age, there is the same risk of enforced conformity in societies – albeit nominally free and democratic – where the state is theoretically striving to achieve perfection for its citizens. In the West, over the past half-century, the state has ceased to be a nightwatchman and is turning itself into a nanny, who in turn threatens to become a mental hospital orderly. A very representative figure in this process was the late Professor Richard Titmuss. His latest editor, Davis Reisman, rightly notes that he possessed 'a pronounced authoritarian streak, as one would expect from an interventionist with a belief in monolithic bureaucratic government'. Titmuss believed that life was a vast number of problems to be solved. When the last problem was solved, the moral order would be complete. Problems were solved as and when the means to solve them became available to the state: 'We do not have policies about the weather because, as yet, we are powerless to do anything about the weather.' As technology advances, so the area of life in which the state, and politics, operate expands, and the moral order becomes progressively more detailed. Conscience contracts, or atrophies.

This central characteristic of the tyranny of politics – its all-pervasiveness – is defended on the grounds that, whereas individual freedom is of value only to the economically privileged, it is meaningless to the poor, who need and want increasing interventionism. Of course this is a fallacy. A year ago, the poorest group on earth, the Indian peasantry, decisively repudiated compulsory contraception, the form of problem-solving interventionism practised on them by Mrs Gandhi's government. Loss of freedom hits the poorest hardest, for they do not have the consolations of property and their privacy is so vulnerable. So easily made the objects of Utopian experiments, they are the chief victims of the all-pervasive state. But of course in a society where politics are compulsory and ubiquitous, as in a legalistic theocracy, there can be no true privacy for anyone, and all are necessarily involved in the experiment. The principal hallmark of a total moral order is equality of subjection.

Need for Demonology

Another is the need for demonology. Once men begin to claim a monopoly of righteousness – and the blueprint for Utopia – they tend to treat those who hinder them, deliberately or not, as evil. The Old Testament is littered with the reviled corpses of men and women who, somehow, found themselves opposite Yahweh in the moral equation, and were accordingly 'smitten'. As Christianity ceased to be a simplifying religion, and moved inexorably towards the construction of a total moral order, it acquired *odium theologicum* and the terrifying aparatus of hell and eternal damnation. Indeed, once you seek to impose this moral order by force it is necessary to create the concept of men wholly possessed by evil. Then you can destroy opponents without compunction. It is hard to kill the obstinate or misguided, but who hesitates to slay a demon?

That is why the erection of a new demonology was one of the most crucial steps in the creation of totalitarian politics, and why it remains a distinguishing characteristic. Jews, capitalists, kulaks were types of evil collective forces. And archetypal individuals were also constructed to epitomise wickedness. The extreme left-wing weeklies are full of the monster-figures once beloved of Redemptorist or Dominican preachers. Sir Arnold Weinstock, for instance, is portrayed as a truly dedicated oppressor of working-class humanity, who scarcely sleeps at night so busy is he evolving spider-like schemes for the further impoverishment of his employees. 'Remember,' Dean Farrar used to say, '*the Devil is a very hard-working fellow*!' But did even he ever work as hard as the Gang of Four, sabotaging the steel-works, spreading lies on the radio and TV, importing pornographic films, making the trains late, lowering artistic standards, destroying the harvests? I am not even sure that they have escaped blame for a number of floods and earthquakes, these busy Shanghai demons. And the trouble with political demonology is that, like *odium theologicum*, it is very catching. Those hate-words come so easily to hand – do they not? – and so easily obliterate shades of political discussion in favour of absolute good and absolute evil. Thus a judge who says something which does not square with current race relations orthodoxy is not misguided or foolish: there are zealots outside his court next day screaming at him that he is a Nazi.

The creation of imaginary devils is used, in turn, to enhance the self-righteousness of those seeking to impose the new moral order. A characteristic of the tyranny of politics is that the political activists present themselves as more estimable than the rest of us. Militancy is a virtue *per se*. It is a new priesthood, whose ritual lustrations and phylacteries endow its members with peculiar claims on our approbation. It is then only a small step to claim privilege, as of course all priesthoods have done throughout history. With privileges necessarily goes the power to oppress. In Soviet Russia, where the moral order of totalitarian politics is firmly institutionalised, scarcely any attempt is made to hide the new privileged class of party members, the Levites of the Communist Utopia. Their power in the new order is justified by their theoretical purity and enthusiasm. Similar claims are being advanced even where the full tyranny of politics has not yet been established. 'We believe' said one zealot at last year's Labour Party conference, 'in the Democracy of the Committed.' A nice little bit of doublespeak, that; of course he means he believes in oligarchy – that is, an elite of militant enthusiasts whose devotion to the cause of total politics, and whose mastery of its apparatus, entitles them to herd the rest of us along whichever path they wish to go. 'Commitment' is not only an intrinsic virtue but is itself an emblem of political sanctity; we have here something very close to the Calvinist doctrine of the elect.

Collective Morality

Such totalitarian devices as the Closed Shop make a 'democracy of the committed' a practical proposition. Once we are all coerced into unions, we become institutionalised in the tyranny of politics. The 'committed' can then speak in our names. They attend all the union meetings, and keep them going until after midnight if necessary, so that the rest of us – if we go at all – then leave in disgust, and they can then pass any resolutions they please. In the spurious moral climate thereby created, participation is almost a duty, and non-participation a social crime. The non-participant cannot protest at what the elect minority do in his name, for he has forfeited his status in the moral order. By means of this 'democratic' manipulation it is possible to erect monstrous tyrannies, which destroy the notion of a private individual, and do so with a spurious moral authority.

The tyranny of religion was halted and reversed only when men, in weariness and desperation, joined together to limit the degree to which clericalism could penetrate their lives. They thus devised the private sphere and, as it were, erected a protective constitutional framework around the individual conscience. We now face the threat of an assault on our personalities and privacies by the collective moralism of politics – which is nothing more than a mask for the egotism and ambition of tiny bands of bigots. We must erect constitutional defences here also, and say: 'Thus far may politics enter, and no further. Within these frontiers let scepticism flourish and the private non-political being be left in peace!' In short, let us make a corner of the world safe for the Erasmian majority, who have the refreshing modesty to wish 'to define as little as possible'.

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GETTING AND SPENDING – 5

Mary Morgan

No Moaning at the Bar

In a small, terraced house in one of those 20,000 streets that lie under the sky of South London, I found Edward Smith, a 27-year-old bachelor. He shares the house with three friends, all the same age, all – two men, one girl – unmarried. The girl it is, I imagine, who keeps the place surprisingly tidy; a glass had rolled under a chair but there were daffodils in a bowl standing on the television set. They rent the house furnished but, the furniture being so awful, they've crammed it into a back room. The sitting room now holds an assortment of pieces loaned by aunts, a piano owned by one of the communards. The small Indian rug and two indiscernible prints are Edward's only material possessions.

Ah, yes, you'd guess, we have here a quartet of radical social workers, a full house of teachers – and you would be wrong. In fact, they belong to the Bar. And what a close and exclusive profession it is. In the whole of England and Wales practising barristers number less than 5,000; not so much a trade union as a medieval guild, wherein lies the power and the profit.

It is fair to say on the whole, that barristers are a mistrusted lot. The rest of us do not care much for the purposely obscurantist mumbo-jumbo and rigmarole, the calculated remoteness from the customer; all of which we see as designed to confuse and control those forced to buy their service. For those inside the magic circle however, membership has traditionally eased the road to power, to the glittering prizes. It is only a sprint from The Temple to Westminster and there the large, legal caucus present in every Parliament since King John ensures that business flourishes.

Was it ambition, then, that drew Edward Smith into the law? I think not. What appeals to him is its unique mixture of the flamboyant and scholarship. 'Being on my feet in court gives me a buzz,' he said. 'When the case can go either way and you make a good jury speech, that's marvellous.'

When life, though, is not buzzing being a barrister is 'a strange combination of tedium and stress'. And, on the lower rungs, not all that rewarding either. He may one day earn £30,000 a year but in 1977 his earnings before tax were £3,300. 'And one-third of that I may never see. It simply gets lost,' he said. 'It could be that the solicitor doesn't pay up or the case could go on remand and not be over for years, by which time my papers could have disappeared. And, at this level, the clerk won't bother to press for your money. As far as he is concerned magistrates' court work is a PR exercise, keeping the solicitors happy so that they will bring in the big cases, say in the Old Bailey, worth £30,000.'

Keeping on the right side of the clerk is essential since he runs the whole show. The clerks themselves (all of whom, apparently, come from a narrow, self-perpetuating clerkhood in the East End, a kind of Dickensian *mafioso*) can earn upwards of £18,000 a year. They dole out the briefs, getting 10 per cent commission on each. 'The ordinary diet for someone like me,' said Edward Smith, 'is magistrates' court work. You get £15 to £20 a case and about five cases a week, maybe more. In a divisional or crown court the rate is £60 to £70 a case. The most lucrative sort of case for me is where a motorist is willing to pay £35 to keep his licence. I'm disappointed now if I don't earn £100 a week.'

This is not quite as profitable as it sounds. For instance, his actual gross receipts in 1977 were £4,800 but the 10 per cent commission to the clerk, £600 a year rent to his chambers and travelling costs brought it down to the £3,300. These expenses are tax deductible but apart from them he has nothing but the cost of his notebooks and plastic wing collars on which to claim tax relief, a sum of £1.50 a week, and so he will pay nearly the full whack of income tax; like most young, single people.

Gross Receipts	£4,800
Rent of Chambers	£600
Commission to Clerk	£480
Professional Travelling Expenses	£416
National Insurance	£136
Nat. Ins. Self-Employed Tax	£140
Income Tax (estimate)	£600
Net Income	£2,428
Rent	£390
Fuel	£100
Food	£1,000
Travel to Work	£240
Leaves	£698

The communards' household expenses are split four ways. The rent which was £55 a week has recently been reduced by the Rent Tribunal to £30. (A foolish man to let to lawyers; now an angry landlord, he has applied to the courts for an order of possession.) In the last quarter the telephone bill was £45, gas and electricity £34. Four can live cheaper than one.

Edward Smith's diet is dangerously polystyrated. He is archetypally, hopelessly undomesticated. He lunches every day at the same café, gammon and chips (75p). For his supper, at least three evenings a week he carries home fish and chips or Kentucky fried chicken. One evening a week he eats in a Turkish restaurant (£2.50) or in a pricier Indian one (£3.50). Raw materials, mostly for the grill pan, occasionally for his two saucepans end up costing him £3 to £10 a week. He buys chops, chicken legs, bacon, frozen peas, sliced bread, Nescafé, butter, eggs and, wait for it, real potatoes and brussels sprouts. I don't think he gets much change out of £20.

He spends about £10 a week on drink, a pint after work, two or three in the pub at ten o'clock. They do not keep drink in the house – 'we would drink it' – but occasionally he buys a bottle of wine for visitors or to take to parties. The parties come up at the rate of one a fortnight. His life is not as erratic or gadabout as one might suppose – in fact the domestic picture seemed rather touchingly decorous. Two evenings a week are taken up with serious meetings with other radical young lawyers and once a week he goes to the cinema. He usually goes out with a girl and usually pays for her. 'They always offer to pay but somehow I'm the one writing the cheque at the end of the meal. I don't in the least mind and anyway it's my fault never having enough money on me. Writing cheques doesn't alarm me but seeing the cash pour away does. I think, well, it's only going on my overdraft and I can pay that off in the vague future, when I'm earning more.'

Luckily for the overdraft, he is quite well set-up for clothes. When he was called to the Bar two years ago, his parents staked him the uniform of his new profession. They bought him the pin-striped suits, they have to be three-piece, two, at £80 each, the grandfather collarless shirts to wear under the wing collars, £8 each, an overcoat, £35. They also bought him the props – wig, £80, gown, £25 and a collection of the absurd wing collars, 30p each. And, of course, the mysterious white bands worn around the neck over the gown, which we speculated might signify incorruptibility. In the last year he has spent £100 on his clothes, on three pairs of shoes, two soberly legal pairs, £32, one ordinary pair, £10; three grandpa shirts, one new, two off a barrow for £3; jeans, shirts and socks.

Because he does not have a car, hours and hours of his day he sits on a bus, going from The Temple to law courts all over London. He eases this tedium by reading novels (he buys a paperback a week) *The Times* (for its Law Reports) and the *Sunday Times* – it comes to £3 a week. The bus-fares are tax deductible but the tube to The Temple costs £1 a day.

Need he have any worries about his future? Even with such a privileged enclave the average wage of the junior Bar is £6,000 a year (for QCs it is £18,000). It's not peanuts but it's not gravy either. The glittering prizes are there for those as they say, with the speed but it is a very dicey profession. Of all the people of the old and new bourgeoisie to whom I've talked only he has the chance to make big money and avoid the severe crises of getting and spending. This small group, chosen at random, are part of an expanding middle-class, itself an irony of our times. Thank God they cannot be labelled 'representative' of anything more than that. The bond in common is the need to earn and pay one's way. A forlorn quality in common is a feeling of helplessness, almost an inertia about the political and economic forces which determine the way they live now.

(Concluded)

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Farewell Diary

☐ Clearing out your desk can be a thoroughly therapeutic experience. You discover much that you had forgotten and a good deal that you would rather not remember. But what struck me most was the way distance lends, not enchantment, but perspective to the view. All those mounds of memos, that battery of bumf – how was it that it could all in one moment of careless rapture be cast into the waste paper basket? And why on earth had I kept it for so long? Of course journalism is an immediate trade and what appears immediate can all too easily seem important too. I am still rubbing my eyes at the notion that five or six years ago the whole future of the NS – incidentally, 65-years-old next month – should have been deemed to depend on the ease with which it would manage to get itself into a colour jacket. We tried it, I think, twice; and it was a disaster. I threw all that type of 'presentation' material into the w.p.b. with a particular relish.

☐ What I was forced to dispose of with much more reluctance was the 'letters mountain' NS readers have sent me over the past six years. I don't mean letters for publication: I mean the daily private correspondence any NS editor gets. I had no idea of its scope or volume until I started being on the receiving end of it; but I would not have been without it for worlds. There were those who wrote at least once a week – 'Dear Sir, Stand down at once' alternating (from the same correspondent) with 'Dear Mr Editor, You are doing an outstanding job, I pray your health holds up'. Then there was our old friend 'I have instructed my newsagent . . . ' – always guaranteed to be in full flower after we had made some reference to the Royal Family (and so revealing of that command-from-above and obedience-from-below attitude that still disfigures British life). But the letters I suspect I shall miss most are those that genuinely appealed for help. They came from families of prisoners, victims of the immigration laws or merely the hostages of bureaucracy. And here I should perhaps pay a tribute to the difference in atmosphere produced by having a Labour government in Whitehall. Almost without exception I found that Labour ministers (and particularly Alex Lyon, Shirley Summerskill and Merlyn Rees) would give you considered, detailed and usually compassionate replies. It was not always so.

☐ Not that I should pretend that the relationship between the NS and Labour's hierarchy has invariably been cordial or even polite. Our own Letters Column, especially in the Harold Wilson era, would anyway tell quite a different tale. So, too, would a cache of private correspondence I have just unearthed. Nothing, not even our open criticisms of Wilson's leadership, caused greater offence to the Labour Establishment than an article on the Chester-le-Street by-election we published in February 1973. Written by Richard West, it suggested in fairly precise terms that all was not as it should be in the Labour Party of the North East. Six prominent members of the Parliamentary Labour Party (including two present cabinet ministers) promptly wrote to me privately to denounce the NS's 'treachery'. To the question I posed in return – 'Do you, or do you not, believe that Alderman Andrew Cunningham is an appropriate person to be in a position to wield influence on the Labour Party both locally and nationally?' – I never got a reply. Perhaps not surprisingly – since Alderman Cunningham, although at the time the 'godfather' of the Labour Party in the North East, a member of the NEC and chairman of its finance committee, was subsequently charged with corruption and went to prison for his part in the Poulson affair.

☐ That seems to me to underline the essential dilemma in Labour's attitude to the press – even to that small part of it that is broadly on its side. It does not want candour – still less, criticism; it requires blind, unswerving support. And on that requirement all its own efforts to run a press of its own have predictably, and properly, foundered. Even Hugh Gaitskell fundamentally misunderstood the function of left-wing papers. I can still hear the wistful tones in which he declared in 1958 at the *Reynolds News* concert/demonstration (and what a memorial to journalistic misunderstanding those occasions were in themselves):

> Every weekday at least 2 million copies of Tory newspapers go into Labour homes – and on Sundays even more. What a tremendous effect there would be if all these people took Labour papers instead. What a grand boost for our cause and what a lesson for the Tory press lords.

Alas, it is, and always was, a Transport House delusion that what even Labour people look for in papers is rigid political commitment.

☐ On one subject, however, even NS readers do clearly have pretty 'rigid' convictions. In any topics table that I compiled from my 'angry letters' file, advertisements would run out the easy winner. Complaints have ranged from the allegation that by buying space in the NS large organisations protect themselves from criticism (quite untrue – Crucifer *passim* on banks) to the charge that the NS convicts itself of double standards by publishing advertisements that do not always chime in with its editorial line. This latter has always seemed to me a particularly double-edged doctrine. If the NS for example, as a matter of policy, refused advertisement from Aims for Freedom and Enterprise, where could the legitimate complaint be from the Left if papers like the *Express* and the *Mail*, on principle, turned down advertisements from the Labour Party or even the trade unions? A thought, as they say, that I leave with you.

☐ I liked the remark that appeared in my own local paper – the *Kensington News & Post* – the other week that 'more speculative column inches had been devoted by Fleet Street to the problem of who would be the next editor of the NS than to the burning question of who will marry Prince Charles'. Certainly the NS has no reason to complain of the amount of comment it continues to attract from the rest of the press – and if much of it is spiky and snide, then that is hardly surprising. For to Fleet Street the NS will always be an anomaly: a paper quite unbeholden to any group that still manages to survive without benefit of outside subsidy – either private (the *Spectator*) or public (the *Listener*). And if you wondered why all those grand dailies and Sundays sounded so snooty about our way of selecting an editor, isn't that pretty obvious, too? Or did you really believe that the people who own papers actually relish the idea of those who work on them presuming to get ideas above their station? Just in case you did, let me tell you a story. Not so long ago, before newspapers became historical curios, I was rung up by the BBC Radio programme, *You the Jury*, and asked if I would be ready to propose the motion in one of its weekly debates 'That the British press should not be for sale to the highest bidder'. Yes, I said, that sounded fine. But the debate never took place – for the simple reason that all the obvious people invited to oppose it (Sir Richard Marsh, Sir Max Aitken, even the redoubtable Mr Victor Matthews) found one excuse or another for not appearing. I wouldn't dream of calling them 'guilty men' – but they must be fellows with very guilty consciences.

☐ For the rest, the final word that appears at the foot of column three on the previous page should, I suppose, really be appearing here again on this one. But then I should have missed the opportunity of offering all my good wishes to my successor, Bruce Page – and also of expressing my real sadness that James Fenton and Nicholas Garland appear, at least in their familiar spots on pages two and three, for the last time in this issue. Both have been around the NS since well before Crux transmogrified into Crucifer – who, incidentally, since all that seems such a long time ago, signs himself this week

Anthony Howard

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Mr Gibson attacked the council over the lack of public toilets. He said old people could not find toilets or deckchairs and had been forced to sit on the steps of the bandstand. – *Herne Bay Press* (W. G. Wright)

☐ A licence allowing air passengers travelling between Britain and the Irish Republic to buy duty-free drink and cigarettes from mobile trolleys at Heathrow has been granted by Uxbridge magistrates, subject to certain fire precautions. – *The Times* (J. McLoughlin)

☐ In keeping with his practical concern for animals Col. Forbes' main interests are sporting: shooting, fishing, hunting and racing. – *Cotswold Life* (Leo DeFreitas)

☐ Mecca have ruled that girls competing in the heats of Miss United Kingdom must parade in T-shirts and shorts. But a council official said: 'Swimsuits allow the girls to use their personality and dress sense.' – *Daily Mirror* (Glyn Thomas)

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Roy Hattersley*

Jogging Along

I am delighted to discover from the pages of the NEW STATESMAN (London Diary, 10 March) that the Deputy Commissioner of Police for the metropolis believes that middle-aged men running through the streets of London 'dressed as athletes' should be treated with the utmost suspicion. Anyone concerned with the moral welfare of the capital must rejoice that its elderly degenerates have been driven to such reckless desperation. And, since few potential victims will be seduced by breathless blandishments wheezed out of paunch-distended tracksuits, it is comforting to know that ageing roués have forsaken collapsible top hats and silk-lined opera coats and now stalk the West End with ADIDAS written on their backs.

But my greatest joy is purely personal. I am no longer alone. So many other middle-aged men are making a similar (if you will excuse the expression) exhibition of themselves that their portly image has imprinted itself on the mind of the perceptive Deputy Commissioner. The discovery that the rest of the daily runners are not all young and lithe is worth the risk of arrest. And if I am taken in charge by one of the assiduous young constables of South West 1, I shall simply place the blame where it rightfully belongs – on E. R. T. Dexter and Leo Tolstoy.

In 1976 I gave to Mr Dexter a piece of information that the Foreign Office had taken 30 seconds to collect. Being a man of extreme courtesy, he invited me – as a symbol of gratitude – to spend a day at Lords during the Second Test against the West Indies. To West Indians, Mr Dexter is a particular hero and as we walked round the ground, men from Kingston and Georgetown pressed all sorts of alcohol upon him in memory of centuries he had scored and they had witnessed. Being a man of extreme courtesy Mr Dexter never refused their salutations. Yet at close of play he was as upright and lucid as he had been before the stumps were pitched. In wholly unslurred speech he told me how he triumphed over such adversity: 'I run every day.'

I was ready to receive the word. It was the summer of *War and Peace* and Napoleon's army marched out of my television set twice each week. The retreat from Moscow had begun and Russian peasants staggered West, weighed down by the loot and luggage of the *Grande Armée*. The least fit and most feeble collapsed in the snow and were dispatched by a single thrust from a long French bayonet. I knew that, had I been there (I always identify with peasants), I would have been among the first to go, victim of the fate that destroys those who take too little exercise.

So I followed Mr Dexter's example and most of his advice. But for some weeks I ignored the instruction to buy proper shoes. The effect on my feet was spectacular. The blisters I anticipated, the swollen ankles were to be expected. But I was not prepared for the toenails. Each one grew to look exactly like the flag of Imperial Japan. Despite ten identical suns, rising blood red at the end of my feet, I ran on.

I ran on, but at first not very fast and not very far. 'Start gradually,' Mr Dexter told me, so I began by running 100 paces and walking 100 paces, running 100 and walking 100. I hit the pain barrier after 50, but the tendency to collapse almost immediately my feet hit the ground proved a remarkable advantage. From the earliest days I enjoyed the double fantasy of being Emile Zatopek and David Coleman simultaneously. Through the purple haze and the high pitched buzz the unmistakable voice drove me on 'his legs have turned to jelly – only courage keeps him going now'.

Fantasy is absolutely essential. One touch of cold physiology and the senior or mature runner is finished. Reading *Running* – the American runners' bible – I became so disheartened that I had to choose between the book and the activity. I reached page 300 before I could run the distance recommended on page 19. Now I avoid all medical advice. Prognoses that step from the promise of 20 extra years to the threat of sudden death are difficult to reconcile. So I pushed them all to the back of my mind where they rattle about as I run.

Yet I run with increasing enthusiasm. Instead of boring people with stories about Sparkbrook Labour Party, Sheffield Wednesday and the Retail Price Index I now bore people exclusively about running. I pity men who do not run and in their presence smile the secret self-satisfied smile exclusive to the elect who look out on life from inside a Marks & Spencer's tracksuit.

Of course, it is still an effort to start and a relief to finish. But once I have forced myself over the first few yards real enjoyment sets in, and there is a special satisfaction in lying back, submerged in hot water and the knowledge that I ran again today. I still pant when I walk upstairs or pick up small parcels. But I can run for two uninterrupted miles. And on good days with the wind behind me I sometimes manage three.

Most important of all, I have regained the sensations of my youth – aching muscles, sweat running down the small of my back, and the special abandon of being out in the rain and not looking for shelter. Now the police, after all these years, have become suspicious again. Deputy Commissioner, it's great to be young.

Roy Hattersley is Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection. His book Goodbye to Yorkshire *is published by Penguin this week.*

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Names Please

For reasons that are too multitudinous and self-evident to lay before you, the question of weight being by no means the least important, my name was not put forward for inclusion among those of the prospective scientific candidates due to be blasted off from earth in 1980 in a re-usable Space Shuttle and sent into orbit in order to work far away up there in a European Space-laboratory ('After you with that Bunsen'). It seems that almost anybody could apply for a seat on this unusual jaunt for which the exceptional athletic abilities required of those original moon-walkers are no longer needed and, as a result, over 2,000 people pressed forward, all eager for the treat. The passengers are in fact to be scientists rather than astronauts and the appalling cost is being met, without any reference to you and me of course, by the EEC and with Germany, I rejoice to say, being socked for a far higher proportion of the cash than poor old penniless England. The European applicants have now been short-listed and whittled down to four, only one of whom is going to join with other national representatives and attention focuses on the strongly fancied Dutch aspirant, aged 31, a recent snap showing him to be the possessor of a drooping handlebar moustache so lengthy and luxuriant that one fears it may get itself caught up in the delicate controls at lift-off and interfere with the sensitive mechanism. His name, I beg you to believe me, is Wubbo Ockels, so cries of 'Another sandwich, Wubbo?' and 'Good for you, Wubbo' may be heard echoing round the capsule.

Before I leave for the time being the, to me, fascinating subjects of names and America, about which I have recently been writing, do let me share with you excerpts from a book, *Remarkable Names of Real People*, kindly sent to me by an old friend now living in the US and formerly a distinguished editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*. It is a compilation by gifted John Train of what turn out to be mainly American names, a real connoisseur's collection of genuine oddities (invented names are no fun at all) put together with the help of an international network of assiduous correspondents. A preface by none other than S. J. Perelman is, as they say in the textile trade, a guarantee of quality. The enterprising publisher is Clarkson N. Potter of New York who is, I trust, making every effort to arrange for the publication of this little treasure over here.

A lady from Lakeland, Florida, anxiously wondering whether she had the world's funniest name, which happened to be Mrs Verbal Funderburk, wrote to Mr Train to inquire and found that she was really pretty much of an also-ran, Mr Train easily calming her with a reference to two art school students from Minneapolis who were called Tunis Wind and Sharon Willfahrt, both of them classmates of Cinderella Hardcock, the history of art being safe in the hands of a New York art historian named Violet Organ. And Mrs Funderburk was lucky in another way. We all know the American custom by which women retain their own surname after marriage, merely tacking on to it that of their spouse. Picture then the plight of a Miss Belcher who married a Mr Wack. On Mr Wack's decease, she promptly married, evidently liking the product, his brother and thus wound up facing the world as Mrs Belcher Wack Wack.

It is the first impact of an unusual name that is so potent: a number of repetitions and then its fresh charm is gone and, moreover, one can get accustomed to anything. For example, I was at school with a boy called Boddham-Whetham, a name which, after we had merrily mispronounced it for a week, became to us as ordinary as Henderson. The book we are discussing understandably quotes our own British admiral, Sir Cloudsley Shovel, but that is a name as familiar and unremarkable to us as his skilful feat of running the entire fleet full tilt into the rocky and unyielding Scilly Isles, drowning whole shiploads of sailors and getting himself buried in Westminster Abbey as a reward. However, Mr Train swiftly makes up for this non-surprise by reminding us that the officer commanding the Guantanamo Naval Base was a Captain Bigge Boozer. Again, our compiler finds pleasure in Miss Horsey de Horsey, though of course we have known for years that she was a close friend in the Crimea of that frightful Lord 'Half a League' Cardigan.

But it is the US that scoops the prize and delightful novelties can always be expected from a nation which can take in its stride such Christian names as Chlorine, Twitty, La Urine, Zippa, Coita, Arson, Dewdrop, La Morte, Dinette, Bugger, Cad and Constipation, and on and into the even wider world of memorable surnames in which America never lets us down – Aphrodite Chuckass, Sexious Boonjug, Zita Apathy, Heidi Yum-Yum Gluck and Sistine Madonna McClung. But though the New World may excel, other countries occasionally ring the bell. When in the 1930s a prominent White Russian leader was seized by OGPU agents in the streets of Paris and spirited away, disguised as merchandise, on to a Russian ship, the lynx-eyed French *commissaire de police* in charge of the case was Charles Adolphe Faux-Pas Bidet. To distract his mind from this dramatic and puzzling affair, one can only hope that in his leisure moments he enjoyed a little light literature, possibly the works of an authoress now, alas, but seldom read, Madame Fouqueau de Pussy.

In the 1920s, various English wags, discovering in the telephone directory the name of a Mrs Trampleasure, used to ring her cheekily up to ask whether she had that day had her pennyworth. A similar fate befell a Hollywood actress called Gisella Werberserch-Piffel who repeatedly received telephone calls asking whether she was by any chance the Gisella Werberserch-Piffel whom the caller had met in, say, Monte Carlo. On receiving a cold denial, the caller's answer was invariably 'Ah, then that must have been *another* Gisella Werberserch-Piffel.' Other names lay themselves open to endless impertinences – the Jamaica attorneys Lawless & Lynch, a Louisiana hospital official called Luscious Pea, a singing teacher from British Columbia (Mrs Screech) and, by contrast, an editor of the *Christian Science Monitor* (Silence Bellows), together with the Norfolk plumbing firm of Plummer & Leek and a Houston social leader called Ima Hogg.

Almost my favourite name belongs to yet another resident of New York City, Bambina Broccoli. I see her as very *petite* and animated and possibly a neighbour of little Mrs Tiney Sprinkle, about whose life one longs to know more. Then I have room and to spare in my heart for Fanny Fangboner (a nurse from Ohio), a native of Maryland (Noble Teat), an Italian contractor called O. Hell, an Australian undergraduate (Grecian T. Snooze), a gentleman named, and very inappropriately I feel sure, Gaston J. Feeblebunny, and when I die, I wish my remains to be attended to by the Quick-Park Funeral Home of Sandusky, proprietor Goody P. Creep, though I had some little difficulty in deciding between him and a Houston undertaker called Groaner Digger.

Roger Woddis

Ballad of Brave Roddy

'He is loyal, steadfast and unafraid.' – *Daily Express* on Roddy Llewellyn's defence of Princess Margaret.

Young Roddy was a fearless youth,
With passion on his side;
He also had a mighty mouth,
Which he could open wide.

His damsel suffered sticks and stones,
And dragons breathing fire;
He heard their hateful hamiltones:
'Yon lassie should retire.'

Young Roddy's love was rich and rare,
Which he would fain express:
'There never was a damsel fair
Who suffered such distress.'

A jingo, overcome with joy,
Cried, 'Nice one, Roddy – nice!
Your lady is our dearest toy,
And cheap at half the price.'

Young Roddy was a steadfast male,
His passion was sincere,
And given luck, it could not fail
To further his career.

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Letters to the Editor

Those Silly Teachers

Sir, Tim Albert is quite right when he says (NS 24 March) that the NUT has increased its membership in the past year, that their Oxfordshire campaign was a success, and that their reaction to the National Front was sensible. He also praises one or two other achievements of the NUT. But the main premise of his article – that the NUT is unpopular because it sometimes does silly things – is untypically glib, superficial and thoughtless. There is no denying, of course, that the NUT is unpopular – with LEAs who adopt a cavalier attitude and refuse to negotiate over a pay claim. This is inevitable. Nor is it surprising that they should be unpopular with the DES if they criticise one of its Green Papers. But in both cases, as in their reaction to the Taylor Report, they were fulfilling the traditional role of trade unions or professional associations of looking after the interests both of their members and of the service in which they are employed.

To be fair to Tim Albert, in the case of the pay claim and the subsequent 'silly' sanctions, he fell victim to the danger to which weekly journalists are prone, that of being overtaken by events. By the time the NS was published, on 24 March, the teachers' employers had ceased to be intransigent, and the Burnham teachers' panel had accepted their offer of 10 per cent. Now this could be regarded as a victory for the teachers' unions or a triumph of common sense. Whichever way you look at it, it could scarcely be seen as an example of teachers being silly.

Another of the NUT's silly seasons, we are told, was the occasion of the Great Debate and the subsequent Green Paper. The fact is that the NUT were critical partly because some of the recommendations were already standard practice in many schools, and particularly because most of the others required the kind of resources that the Government was manifestly unwilling to release. It is true that the NUT were apprehensive about those proposals which implied a more centralised control of the curriculum. But such concern is understandable in a country which has always prided itself on the autonomy of its LEAs and schools. If the NUT, as an experienced and responsible custodian of the interests of education, felt it right to make warning noises, centralists might regard them as misguided – but hardly silly. It was pursuance of this same monitory role which led to the description of the Taylor Report as a 'busybodies' charter'. Such hyperbole may be deplored, but at least it drew attention to the problems which could follow the implementation of some of the report's proposals. Total acceptance of Taylor, it could be argued, might lead to a silly situation where the control of a school passed from the head and staff to an ad hoc, dubiously elected lay body. There may be no shortage of volunteers for such a body, but that is not to say that they would make a better job of it than experienced, professional teachers. Incidentally, LEAs and their education officers are much more opposed to the report than the NUT.

Tim Albert ended with a suggested topic for discussion at the NUT's National Conference. Let me do the same. Whatever else the recent suspension of voluntary activities might have done, it did serve to highlight the extent to which LEAs and parents have relied upon the good nature and public-spirited attitude of teachers. It is probably no exaggeration to suggest that much of the nation's post-war economy and standard of living has depended on the willingness of teachers to look after children, continuously, for seven and sometimes eight hours a day, so that mothers could go out to work. The NUT national conference might do its members, and the education service, a power of good, if it were to consider the degree to which educational standards might be raised if teachers spent less time and energy on activities which should never be their responsibility.

ARTHUR FRIGHT

25 Tormead Road
Guildford, Surrey

Fit To Vote

Sir, Milton Shulman is quoted in your radio column (NS 17 March) as calling for the disenfranchisement of the 'loony' 10 per cent of the population. What he probably does not realise is that the percentage of the population deprived of the vote cannot be far short of this figure. Not only can mental hospital patients not vote, nor can serving prisoners, homeless men in night shelters, people living in Salvation Army or Church Army Hostels, residents of doss houses, men living in probation hostels, prison or mental after-care hostels, people in hostels for dry alcoholics, residents of rooming houses, and people sleeping rough. These and numerous other groups are either deprived of the vote or else ineligible because the places where they live are not considered fixed addresses.

I have been approached by men living in dry houses or sleeping in the night shelter in Leeds, where I work, and asked to raise this matter; there are those in this situation who feel bitterly the indignity of being deprived of the vote. Since among this group are not merely the poorest of the population, but also those who are denied any welfare benefits because of their lack of an address, one would have thought that they make a natural constituency for Labour. It is puzzling therefore that the Government, while rightly insisting on one man one vote in Rhodesia, cannot see its way to bringing about one man one vote in the United Kingdom.

OWEN WELLS

66 The Grove
Ilkley
West Yorkshire

Taxing Literary Prizes

Sir, Now Crucifer has it wrong (London Diary, 17 March). If this goes on, I shall have to offer to write your London Diary myself. The issue of the taxation of Andrew Boyle's Whitbread prize *was* raised in the House of Commons. On 21 February I devoted most of a 20-minute speech to the Inland Revenue's attempt to change policy and specifically to their treatment of my distinguished constituents Andrew Boyle and Gavin Ewart. I referred to correspondence I am having with the Financial Secretary on the subject; to the pretence of Treasury Ministers that no change has taken place; to the fact that Andrew Boyle's case is being taken up by the Society of Authors and that the Arts Council is taking legal advice generally and specifically about their award to Gavin Ewart. I commend *Hansard* Columns 1260 to 1263 to anyone interested and assure Crucifer that this issue is going to be fought on all fronts.

HUGH JENKINS

House of Commons

Pakistan's Dictatorship

Sir, I have recently been in Pakistan where I found editors I visited having their talks monitored by soldiers, journalists and printers harassed, lawyers cowed, the courts subservient to the soldiery, and the whipping of dissenting newsmen the order of the day.

Because of an appeal from numerous Pakistani journalist friends, some of whom now languish in General Zia's gaols, I have recently, together with some journalist-MP friends, formed the London Committee for Democratic Government and Press Freedom in Pakistan. In the long run, we are concerned not only with press freedom in the face of military dictatorship in Pakistan. We are equally concerned with affairs in other countries where press colleagues can neither speak out, organise nor breathe the slightest opposition to the prevailing regime. It looks like being a long haul, but would any journalists, writers or communicators interested in assisting our committee, even in small ways, or by offering professional support, please write?

CLAUD MORRIS

15a Lowndes Street
London SW1

Victims of Yalta

Sir, Antony Polonsky, in his review (NS 17 March) of my *Victims of Yalta* writes that it 'covers much the same ground as Lord Bethell did in *The Last Secret,* an admirable book which is subjected to some unnecessarily carping criticism by Count Tolstoy'.

It is not normally customary or desirable for an author to reply to a review, but as these remarks contain a very serious slur on my professional reputation as an historian, I hope you will permit me to answer them. Mr Polonsky is clearly suggesting that my book is a mere rehash of Lord Bethell's, with a few additional quotations from documents unavailable to him thrown in for good measure. There appears in addition the unpleasant innuendo that it is my consciousness of this that leads me to make petty gibes at my predecessor's work. The charge that *Victims of Yalta* (230,000 words) is a mere plagiarism of *The Last Secret* (85,000 words) is best judged by readers of the books. Certainly no reputable reviewer so far has hinted at such an improbable interpretation. In fact nearly half the chapters of my book deal with matters untouched by Lord Bethell, or alluded to only in a passing sentence.

Reference to 'unnecessarily carping criticism' seems equally uncalled for. There are four allusions to Lord Bethell's book in the text of *Victims of Yalta.* The first, in the introduction, refers to Lord Bethell's 'vivid picture' of the repatriation operations – scarcely uncomplimentary. The remaining three do indeed contain criticisms of passages in *The Last Secret,* but I should certainly have felt myself failing in my duty as an historian had I suppressed them. None of these examples is a case of mere pedantry. I refute charges that Domanov's Cossacks 'had fought the war more fiercely than most', and were accustomed to lying and deceit. I show that a suggestion that Domanov betrayed his own men to the Soviets is a baseless slur on the reputation of an officer who can no longer defend himself; and thirdly I correct in temperate terms a misreading of a military order so crucial that the whole of my Chapter XI centres on its interpretation.

These questions concern not merely historical truth, but also the personal reputations of men still living or not long dead. I cannot see how any serious historian could have suppressed discussion of them, nor how one can avoid reference to the book or author in question. (Where minor corrections of factual error occurred, I deliberately relegated them to the

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obscurity of footnotes at the back of my book). Mr Polonsky's political morality is not mine, but certain principles are generally held to apply to the writing of books – and reviews.

NIKOLAI TOLSTOY

Gable House
Parbrook
Nr Glastonbury, Somerset

From the Ghetto

Sir, May I correct an error of Martin Walker's in his article about *Spearhead* magazine (NS 17 March)? I have never claimed to be the National Front's intellectual. This epithet about me was in fact coined by the charming, but patronising, Miss Sally Beauman of the *Sunday Telegraph Magazine.* The only person I know who makes extravagant claims with regard to the National Front is Martin Walker, who has cultivated a reputation for himself as an expert on the NF on the basis of superficial literary effusions of the kind you published.

RICHARD VERRALL
Editor

Spearhead
91 Connaught Road
Teddington
Middlesex

Sir, Among the errors of fact contained in Martin Walker's superficial review of the development of *Spearhead* magazine was the attribution of the now long defunct 'Gleanings from the Ghetto' column to me. The column was prepared anonymously under the *nom de plume* 'Julius'. Study of the magazine then and now will indicate that while my (and the magazine's) views on a number of subjects have evolved or changed, I am not and never have been shy of expressing myself under my own name.

MARTIN WEBSTER

Spearhead
91 Connaught Road
Teddington
Middlesex

Soldiers and Fear

Sir, Dear me, what *have* I done? Trespassed on Mr Keegan's property by the sound of it. In his grudging review of my book, *War On The Mind: The Military Uses and Abuses of Psychology* (NS 24 March), he goes through the familiar routine of the world-weary academic historian, ever-so-slightly fed up by the journalist who has the impudence to think there is something new under the sun. No doubt Mr Keegan pushes this comforting doctrine to his students at Sandhurst, but I've got news for them. He can't count and he can't read.

He says I have three aims in the book. In my copy at least, on page 22, it states quite clearly that I have four. That shows a careless attitude to numbers by Mr Keegan, don't you think? His attitude to words isn't much better either, for while it was a nice touch to show off his academic credentials with meticulous references to psychological work carried out before the second world war and thereby to imply neglect on my part, he fails to point out that, in my preface, I specifically acknowledge that such work had been done and that I deliberately did not cover this ground so as to avoid duplication. I state, several times, that the second world war was my starting point.

On a more general point, he argues that I neglect the 'real secret about war . . . which is the common property of the freemasonry of soldiers' (another example of his careless attitude to words). This secret is that 'the central act of warfare, battle, is so unpleasant, so degrading, so terrifying that the majority of men will do almost anything to avoid it if they can . . .' Two reactions: 'Wow!' and 'Wrong!' 'War is unpleasant.' Is this the wisdom we pay Sandhurst lecturers for? 'Men will do anything to avoid battle.' No they won't.

Faced with the terrors of war *all* sensible men feel frightened. This may be an overwhelming truth to Mr Keegan but it's not very interesting. What is more surprising is that not all men react the same to these terrors. The evidence is plentiful. S. L. A. Marshall, for instance, showed that the incidence of men too frightened to fire their weapons lest they draw enemy attention to themselves was much smaller in the Korean war than in the second world war. Why? All men have much the same chance to desert in battle but in practice only very few do so; and they are markedly similar to those who desert in peacetime. Why? In my book I quote from an account of the movement of one unit into war in Vietnam. Most did not try to avoid going or to avoid fighting when they got there. Some learned Vietnamese, some studied tropical medicine, others studied translations of the local literature. Only a small minority tried to avoid going. Many of those who did try it on later adjusted. Not until about a month before the end of their tour of duty did contact with the enemy come to be seen by almost everyone as an unjustifiable risk.

Military psychology doesn't have all the answers – far from it. But Mr Keegan seems not to want anybody to pose any questions that might help us understand the face of battle. Tough.

PETER WATSON

The Sunday Times
London WC1

Getting and Spending

Sir, Exactly what is Mary Morgan (NS 10 March) trying to prove? Exactly what have Mr and Mrs Cole to complain about?

> Every evening they go to the pub at 6 o'clock. He drinks two pints of bitter and she has two lagers. At weekends they buy a bottle of whisky. After returning – they drink their home-made wine. With five gallons a week going through the apparatus . . . All told, they spend out about £15 per week on drink. On drink and friends.

What, then, are these people complaining of? The article is very revealing. I had always understood that our hard-worked teachers spent hours and hours out of school hours doing extra work or activities, but now I see I have been misinformed. The Coles start their evening at 6 pm, just about the time when people doing a full day's work are finishing.

The Coles, it seems to me, are overpaid, if anything, with a joint salary of £11,000 a year for what really amounts to a half-time job each. Their hours at school are short and their holidays long and quite clearly they do no extra work at home. If teaching is the rotten job some claim it is, then the Coles take the precaution of doing it in an alcoholic haze, which must smooth off the rough edges if nothing else! Anyone who can afford to spend £15 per week on drink does not require any sympathy from the majority of their fellow men. With their very well-paid jobs, total job security and an index-linked pension at the end of it I fail to see how Mr & Mrs Cole qualify to be the subject of a full page article. Indeed, if the Coles were as sensible as I would expect teachers to be they would realise their good fortune, be glad of the cushy billet and keep their mouths shut.

DIANA ROBERTSON

Liskeard
Cornwall

Who's Right?

Sir, Russell Harty probably blushed when he saw that now notorious apostrophe featured in your 'This English'. But Joan Mackie's defence of it (Letters 17 March) was logical and perfectly sound. Why you printed the semi-literate letter from David Wendon (Letters 24 March) is a mystery. He can't spell 'precede', he talks about 'employing' conclusions and has the nerve to pontificate about what is 'right' in the use of English.

I like your 'This English' feature because it gives me a chance to win an easy £2 book token, not because it is trying to eradicate the debasement of the language (as the egregious Mr Wendon puts it). There is certainly no divine right about the rightness of language. We all make the occasional howler and we should avoid sloppiness of punctuation and communication. But grammar, after all, is only a man-devised, often quite arbitrary, set of rules.

STEPHEN CORRIN

10 Russell Gardens
London NW11

Extraordinary Omission

Sir, I find it significant that in your profile of Lord Annan (NS 17 March) you omitted to make any mention of his chairmanship of the committee which in 1962 produced the Annan Report on the teaching of Russian. I venture to suggest that if it had been implemented that report would have been of far greater importance to education and the intellectual life of this country than the report on broadcasting.

HARRY MILNE

16 North Park Terrace
Edinburgh

Presumptuous?

Sir, The last sentence (ships passing a comma in the night) of my article (NS 24 February) on Dada and Surrealism does sound, when quoted by Michael Palin (Letters 24 March) in isolation, surrealistic. It referred back to my first sentence in which I described Britain (as depicted on the Surrealist map of the world) as a small comma between Ireland and Germany. Mr Palin gives no reason for disliking my criticisms of Magritte and Dali; presumably he thinks it sufficiently ridiculous simply to be seen to criticise such august figures.

JOHN SPURLING

48 Ladbroke Grove
London W11

Et Tu?

Sir, The Hugo Williams poem 'Confessions of a Drifter' (NS 17 March) is a rip-off. Apart from a few lines it derives from an original by the Tang Chinese Poet Tu Mu. The original entitled 'Easing my Heart' appears in the excellent Penguin anthology by A. C. Graham, *Poems of the Late Tang.* I feel both Tu Mu whose poem is far superior to the one you published and his translator deserved some credit and recognition.

J. H. F. HICKS

5 Swyre
Nr Dorchester
Dorset

SEX PROBLEMS?

Sex and relationship counselling can help people who have sexual difficulties or suffer from sexual problems. Professional psychosexual therapy can help many woman who suffer from an inability to achieve orgasm and men who suffer from premature ejaculation. The Marie Stopes has regular clinics for individuals and couples seeking help, so if you feel you need professional advice ring 01-388 0662 for an appointment.

MARIE STOPES HOUSE
108 Whitfield Street, London, W.1. 01-388 0662
- A Clinic since 1925 -

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Paul Foot

Natural Assumptions

Margaret Thatcher: a Tory and her Party
by PATRICK COSGRAVE Hutchinson £5.50

The first sentence of Patrick Cosgrave's book takes us to the heart of his circle, to the very nub:

> A few days after Margaret Thatcher was elected to lead the Conservative Party, the literary editor of the *Spectator* had occasion to ring Norman St John Stevas.

As so often, one historic event had followed another. Mr St John Stevas, in whose 'most random and jesting observations', apparently, 'there is always acuity', rose to the occasion. When congratulated about Thatcher's election, he replied, quick as a flash: 'It wasn't an election. It was an assumption.'

Margaret Thatcher had *assumed* power. It was an experience more religious than political, and especially for the small band of Thatcher supporters. These had observed their heroine during her campaign 'when they had sipped claret with her in the Westminster room of Robin Cooke'. They were astounded by virtues which, for some unexplained reason, had gone almost unremarked by political commentators: wisdom, wit, confidence, even genius. Patrick Cosgrave has set out to inform the public at large of these virtues. The result is the most sustained exercise in sycophancy to reach print since Anthony Shrimsley's unforgettable *The First Hundred Days of Harold Wilson* (Weidenfeld, 1965).

Cosgrave starts with the things that matter. 'Her skin is, of course, very pale . . .' *Of course.* Thank heavens for that. But that is not all:

> She is fortunate, too, in that her skin is remarkably unlined: even around the neck – the most tell-tale of places for a woman of middle age – there are few of the channels that usually arrive with 50, if not earlier.

She is the sort of woman who does things for herself. 'Rather than send to the House of Commons for a book or reference, she will go herself . . .' On the other hand, she is properly looked after:

> Her wardrobe for travel is prepared and supervised by Guinevere Tilney, wife of a Tory back-bencher of distinction, who makes certain that the leader is amply provided with suitable clothes and gadgets (including, for her difficult hair, a set of Carmen rollers) . . .

She is naturally 'an excellent, sometimes a brilliant cook'. But she is not effeminate. 'Her favourite drink is whisky, her taste for which greatly surprised the formidable journalist George Gale . . .' With children, needless to say, 'She has a magic touch'. A devoted mother, she refused to stand for Parliament until the little ones were old enough to go to public school.

Then there are her speeches, many of which are quoted at some length. Here, Patrick Cosgrave does himself a disservice. His brief biography at the end of the book modestly leaves out the fact that he is Margaret Thatcher's speechwriter. It's exciting enough to quote from your heroine's speeches, but immeasurably more exciting if you've written them yourself.

Margaret Thatcher is brought before us as a lioness: a lioness, too, who moves among lions. Patrick Cosgrave tears aside the veil behind which the close political supporters of Margaret Thatcher have been hiding their talents for so long. Here is Keith Joseph, formerly deputy chairman and major shareholder in Bovis: 'The modesty, straightforwardness and moral integrity of Joseph are precisely the qualities that have won him so many devoted friends and supporters . . .' Here, too, is Peter Tapsell, a 'distinguished stockbroker', elsewhere described as 'brave' and 'independent'; Nicholas Ridley, who married into the Guest steel millions, 'brilliant', 'trenchant' and an 'ideal host'; and Airey Neave, 'remarkably vivid, graceful and incisive', 'a lawyer of wide experience, at one time specialising in shoplifting cases'.

These wonderful people, argues Patrick Cosgrave, have brought about a revolution in the Conservative Party. He sees the assumption of power by Margaret Thatcher as the end of muddle-headed pragmatic conservatism – as represented by Edward Heath – and the dawning of a new era when Conservative principles dictate party and government policy. Of these principles, there are three which matter most to Thatcher and Cosgrave. The first is that the market should be free. Thatcher and Joseph, Cosgrave tells us, set up the Centre for Policy Studies to exhume the economic theories of the Austrian fanatic F. A. Hayek and his American disciple Milton Friedman. These gentlemen are opposed to what Cosgrave calls 'the growth, in income and power, of the modern apparatus of the democratic state'. The second principle is inequality. 'Let our children grow tall,' says Margaret Thatcher in one speech, 'but some taller than others.' Let us have some stronger than others, and some richer than others. The third principle is nationalism. Not the wishy-washy patriotism of Edward Heath, of course, but old-fashioned jingoism. Cosgrave quotes a speech from Enoch Powell in 1964 in which Powell reversed a line from Kipling's *Recessional.* Kipling had asked: 'What do they know of England who only England know?' Powell proposed: 'Perhaps we know *most* of England who only England know'. To establish this dubious proposition, Powell swung into his top rhetorical gear:

> That marvellous land, so sweetly mixed of opposites in climate that all the seasons of the year appear there in their greatest perfection; of the fields amid which they built their halls, their cottages, their churches and where the same blackthorn showered its petals upon them as us; they would tell us, surely, of the rivers, the hills and the island coasts of England . . .

Change the weather conditions and the plants and the same bombast could be used in any country to arouse people's passions for a piece of territory rather than for human needs and aspirations. Cosgrave thinks that the passage shows a 'staggering display of knowledge and romantic feeling'. More interestingly, he tells us, 'when Margaret Thatcher heard of that passage, she sensed and acknowledged its power and what was for her the truth'.

What sort of society would we live in if her dreams were realised? Cosgrave gives us a hint:

> The world in which she grew up, for all the threats with which it was faced from the continent, was at bottom a world of certainties. Not only was her home life and the world of Grantham composed almost wholly of certainties. So, by and large was the life of her country.

This is a description of Britain in the 1930s. There were other 'certainties' which seem to have escaped Patrick Cosgrave. Mass unemployment for one; a seemingly endless economic slump, which could only be ended by war; weak and servile trade unions; mass poverty and insulting means tests; illness and disease for which proper treatment was available only to those who could afford it: strict immigration controls and a growing current of anti-Semitism.

A more contemporary example of Mrs Thatcher's dream world is in Chile, where the government has followed to the letter the economic advice of Dr Milton Friedman, Thatcher's mentor. In Chile, what Cosgrave describes as 'the impulses of economic man' have been allowed free rein. It is a paradise for brave and independent stockbrokers, brilliant, trenchant steel shareholders, lawyers with wide experience in shoplifting cases, and claret-sippers of every description. Robert Moss, the man who writes Mrs Thatcher's foreign-affairs speeches, has written a book which eulogises the Chile dictatorship and which is still available free from the Chilean embassy.

So here is the central dilemma for Margaret Thatcher and her supporters. We live in an age of state capitalism where the people who thrive on dividends, rents or interests – that is, on wealth which other people produce – need the state more and more. Margaret Thatcher agrees at once that we need more spies in the Special Branch and more police to keep the unemployed out of ladies' purses. She agrees instantly with more state power for the armed forces. But British capitalism also needs funds from the state. It needs investment grants. It needs centralised direction if it is to keep afloat in a more technological market. The very dynamic of the market is forcing the free market out and forcing monopolies in. These monopolies not only

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depend on state direction and support; they are multinational. They know no country and no patriotism.

So it looks, at first sight, as though there is a contradiction between Thatcher's call for 'Professor Hayek and the blackthorns' and the need of the modern businessman whom she represents for more state assistance and some multinationalism. We've seen a paler version of this contradiction before. Eight years ago, the Tory leader Edward Heath summoned his shadow cabinet to a hotel at Selsdon where he spelled out to them his themes for the 1970 election. They were 'patriotism and free enterprise'. He won the election, but within two years he was presiding over the biggest-ever programme of state support for industry and preparing to enter the Common Market.

'I have changed everything,' Margaret Thatcher modestly admitted to Patrick Cosgrave. On the contrary: she will fight the election on 'patriotism and free enterprise'. Thanks to the battering which Labour supporters have had from the Labour government, she might win it. If so, I imagine that she will patch and weave her economic policy very much as Heath did. The NEDDIES, the NEBS, the ECGDS and all the rest of the state machinery for profit-making which she inherits from Labour will, I suspect, be left intact.

The difference between her time and Heath's will not be in economic strategy. It will be in the degree of economic crisis, in the state of panic in her class, and therefore in a violent shift to the right in social policy. Under Thatcher there will be even more bullying and deporting of black people; even more savage judicial punishments, including, perhaps, capital punishment, which Margaret Thatcher has always championed. Above all, the difference will be in the enthusiasm and subtlety with which she will tackle the trade unions. As a skilful class warrior she senses that the unions have had much of the guts knocked out of them by long years of 'sacrifice' and 'cooperation' under Labour. She is spoiling for a fight. The Tories *and* modern British capitalism need a more strident, more uncouth, more ruthless and more racialist reactionary as their leader. Heath was too soft. For instance, he had no stomach for the racialist electioneering in which Margaret Thatcher engaged with such relish earlier this year. As the old Tory slogan has it: wogs begin at Calais, and Broadstairs men are suspect.

There is, however, all the difference in the world between Margaret Thatcher and her Chief Sycophant, Cosgrave. Cosgrave manages to be a dilettante and a fanatic at the same time. He wants to believe in the pure symmetry of the free market, and to gobble at the top Tory table. Margaret Thatcher is neither. She needs men about her who are less idealistic and less squeamish. At the launching party for this book, held in the flat of the distinguished stockbroker Peter Tapsell, Thatcher didn't even bother to turn up. She was distressed, apparently, by some rather excitable behaviour by Cosgrave at some high Tory function. He will have to behave himself if he wants to stay in the charmed circle. In the meantime, if Thatcher's absence does anything to impede the promotion of this horrible little book, so much the better.

J. P. Stern

The Frivolity of Commitment

The Brothers Mann by NIGEL HAMILTON
Secker & Warburg £9.75

Heinrich Mann is known in this country as the author of the book of *The Blue Angel* and of *Man of Straw*, which BBC-2 produced in 1972. The protracted and bitter quarrel between him and Thomas Mann is really the only good reason for writing a joint biography of the two brothers. So fundamental was the conflict which flared up between them in the stifling summer of 1914 that its literary record can be seen to anticipate most of the moral and political problems which have beset European writers since that time.

The relationship between the two brothers had always been close without being particularly harmonious. Both had disappointed their father, the Lübeck senator and consul, by refusing to show any interest in the family firm or any other form of commerce, and both received encouragement from their artistically-minded mother. There was never any doubt that literature was their calling. Heinrich, born in 1871, published his first story in a local newspaper at the age of 18, while his brother, his junior by four years, was writing romantic tragedies in the vein of Schiller and signing his letters, 'Thomas Mann, Lyric-dramatist'.

Their literary careers diverged almost from the start. Was it because Heinrich had to fight his way out of the *bürgerlich* – Buddenbrook – ambience by defying paternal authority, whereas by the time Thomas was ready to drop out of school and turn to literature the old Consul was dead, and their exotic Mama had left commercial and censorious Lübeck and moved to 'artistic' Munich? Whatever the reason, Heinrich saw his literary task as a perpetual challenge to the values of the world in which he was reared. Aggressiveness – occasionally no more than an indiscriminate desire to shock – determined his attitude to the Wilhelminian public: hence the grotesquerie and extravagant style – the aestheticism – of his early stories and plays, and the unrelenting satire of his few major novels. And Heinrich's socialist sympathies – undoctrinaire and broadly humanitarian at first, constructively republican after 1918, pro-Soviet after 1933, ending with a Stalinist apologia during the Cold War – they too are born of the spirit of protest against the Wilhelminian ethos of economic oppression, social injustice and political servitude.

Was Heinrich right to ascribe this ethos to his younger brother? At 26 Thomas published *Buddenbrooks* which, after a slow start, established its author as Germany's greatest novelist (and 'S. Fischer', where a few years before Heinrich had failed to complete his apprenticeship, as one of the country's foremost publishers). In conception and execution alike it is the very opposite of Heinrich's novels: descriptive and conciliatory, slow-moving and seemingly old-fashioned in its stylistic circumstantiality; what little satire it contains is confined to the private and personal sphere. It is a fictional edifice which, like the houses it so lovingly describes, is built to last. The reasons for which Georg Lukács praised it are much more appropriate to Heinrich's work: there is social criticism in *Buddenbrooks*, as indeed there is in every novel, but its source is a picture ('This is how it was'), not an indignation ('This is how it should not have been').

It is ironical to recall that *Buddenbrooks* was planned and begun as a fraternal enterprise, for it greatly aggravated the estrangement between Thomas and Heinrich. At the time when the novel's success led Thomas to a rich and happy marriage and made of him an abrahamic paterfamilias (a situation portrayed with loving irony in his story 'Early Sorrow'), Heinrich's uneasy temperament and erotic tribulations forced him into a nomadic existence and a social isolation he found the harder to endure the less it was compensated for by literary fame. And just as *Buddenbrooks* and the subsequent oeuvre overshadow all of Heinrich's works, so Thomas's humane and tolerant consciousness overshadows and encompasses his elder brother's troubled mind. Can he, Heinrich, have failed to be aware that his was a predicament (the classical Nietzschean *ressentiment*) with which Thomas too was deeply familiar? – and which he, Thomas, had portrayed in the deadly row between Thomas and Christian Buddenbrook a full decade before it occurred in crude reality? One cannot think of anything Heinrich wrote that shows a comparable understanding of his brother's ambivalences.

But it was also an ideological conflict, about the function of literature in society, and for a few years the strength of feelings behind the contending attitudes remained untested, until an altogether larger conflict took a hand in exacerbating it. When 'the great hour called' and Germany went to war, Thomas Mann gave her his unquestioning allegiance. He joined the overwhelming majority of his fellow writers and, eking out inadequate political information and 'lack of popular contact' with patriotic clamour and 'political romanticism', welcomed the war as a redemption of the German spirit from 'Western' politicisation and materialism. Heinrich, on the other hand, was found among the minute number of German authors who opposed the war from its first day, seeing in it the aggressive last stand of embattled imperialism against the 'Western' spirit of democracy and social justice. The spirit of Bach versus the ideas of the French Revolution, music versus politics – this is how Thomas metaphorised the conflict.

Nigel Hamilton gives an accurate chronological account of the publications which

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contain the record of the quarrel, from Heinrich's essay of 1914 in praise of Zola with its barely veiled attack on Thomas, to Thomas's *Meditations of a Non-Political Man*, the 600-page apologia he published in 1918, well after the national cause for which it pleaded had been defeated. But unfortunately Mr Hamilton confines himself to the political issue – Heinrich's pro-French, left-wing and internationalist pacificism is played off against Thomas's right-wing bourgeois conformism – and so the true meaning of the conflict escapes him.

What is left after we have criticised Thomas's nationalistic zeal, his anti-Western diatribes and occasional racialism? Is there not something shameless about the eagerness with which *both* brothers associate their literary and private quarrel with a world at war; and about the fact that, whichever opinion prevails, the result will be books and yet more books? (It was no accident that Heinrich's books reached their highest sales in 1917, while Thomas drew from the quarrel the substance of *The Magic Mountain*.) It is this sort of 'shamelessness' – the truth that comes from a baring of the mind – which for Hegel characterised the modern world.

The importance of *Meditations of a Non-Political Man* is not political at all. It lies in Thomas Mann's condemnation of the use of aesthetics as *ersatz*-politics and of the ideologist's belief in belief. The core of the book is as relevant today as it was 60 years ago: it is a lengthy and often ironical denunciation of the frivolity of commitment. As against that, he speaks for undiminished consciousness, for the creative openness – the 'shamelessness' – of the literary mind; and for the priority of *interest* (including interest in politics) over partisanship.

Once the war was over, the quarrel healed. The brothers Mann faced the Twenties and the common exile of the Third Reich in close alliance: opposition to Hitler's Germany was not a political issue. On the occasion of Heinrich's birthday in Berkeley in 1941 Thomas paid generous tribute to his brother's social-democratic spirit (which by that time he was ready to identify with morality itself), after which 'Heinrich also rose, put on his glasses and also brought forth a thick manuscript'. The guests were touched by the homage the brothers paid each other. 'Yes,' one of them remarked 'they write and read such ceremonial evaluations of each other, every ten years.'

Mr Hamilton has compiled a detailed record of these two lives and given them a simple and unprobing historical setting. Here lies the great virtue of his book; for the rest it is less satisfactory. The quotations from the brothers' letters which, at a guess, make up more than half the book, are not very well translated, and dim little solecisms disfigure the text (Lübeck was built on a 'peninsular'; Thomas decides, improbably, to 'lay myself on the beach', and wonders whether 'a harassed public . . . would . . . peruse through 1,200 pages of *The Magic Mountain*', and so forth).

The critical parts, too, are not very well argued. A single example will do: the novel *Man of Straw* is impressive Wilhelminian satire, but in no sense is it true that 'it had no precedent in German literature' or that it made Heinrich into 'a satirist without peer'. Scores of full-length literary studies have been written on and around Mr Hamilton's subject, and some of the best ones are available in English. Seeing how little critical sense he makes of his material, his total indifference to these studies – he neither lists nor quotes any of them – seems hard to justify.

Antony Polonsky

Bitter Ends

Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps by ROBERT CONQUEST *Macmillan* £6.95

In his definitive account of *The Great Terror* (1968) Robert Conquest calculated that in the years between 1936 and 1950 at least 12 million people died in Stalin's death camps, in addition to another million who were summarily executed. The most deadly and brutal of these camps were to be found in the Kolyma region, the 'pole of cold and cruelty' of the labour-camp system, to use Solzhenitsyn's phrase. In the present book Conquest's aim is to make it clear to Western readers why for Soviet citizens 'Kolyma is a word wholly comparable with Auschwitz'. His account is based largely on 17 first-hand accounts of life in the camps (16 by ex-prisoners, one by a free individual who spent time in the area) and it provides a thoroughly authentic and harrowing picture.

Kolyma is a vast area in the extreme north-east of Siberia, approximately as large as the Ukraine. Gold was discovered there in the mid-1920s and when it proved impossible to mine it with free labour it was decided to use convicts for the purpose. As a result an NKVD agency, *Dalstroy*, the 'Far North Construction Trust', was set up in 1931 to supervise all forced labour projects in the area. Originally the prisoners were treated fairly leniently, but with the new wave of terror unleashed by the purges of 1937 conditions worsened. The head of *Dalstroy*, the Latvian communist Reingold Berzin, was executed and a new and much harsher regime was introduced. It was now that the killing-off of prisoners by overwork and undernourishment became as important to the camp authorities as the mining of gold. A geologist employed by *Dalstroy* complained to a camp official of the harsh treatment meted out to prisoners and remonstrated, 'These people might die.' He received the reply, 'What people? . . . These are enemies of the people', and his intervention subsequently cost him his life.

The convicts worked a 12-hour day and only fulfilment of the norm (which was set deliberately high) gave them the right to 800 grammes of bread and a small amount of other food per day. Non-fulfilment of the

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norm caused a reduction of the bread ration to 500 grammes, which was barely above starvation level. A greater shortfall could cause a reduction to 300 grammes, which led to death within a couple of days. This created a vicious circle; as prisoners became weaker they were unable to complete their norms, received less food and became still weaker until they succumbed to cold and exhaustion. It was conditions like this which caused the death of a quarter of the camp's population every year. The only way to survive was to arrange to be transferred out of gold-mining or tree-felling (the heavy labour assigned to women prisoners, who made up 6 per cent of the camp's population) into an easier job, particularly one of a clerical type or in one of the camps where food was grown.

At its height, the area contained at least 120 full-scale camps whose population varied from 150,000 to 500,000. All in all, something like 3½ million people were sent to Kolyma between 1936 and 1954-56, when the camps were wound up. Of these, 3 million died. The prisoners were predominantly political, and ranged from people accused of Trotskyite sympathies to former soldiers in the Vlasov army and nuns who refused to abandon their orders. Two-thirds of them worked in gold-mining and in the early 1940s the region was producing 400-500 tons of gold, one-third of world production. Every ton of gold cost at least 1,000 lives.

One of the more horrific features of the camps was the authorities' use of common criminals, who made up 5 per cent of the convict population, to terrorise the politicals. However, after 1945, with the influx of the tougher Vlasov veterans and Ukrainians, this method of oppression proved rather less effective. There are many parallels to German concentration camps, from the luxurious life lived by many camp commanders, whose position was nevertheless often highly precarious, to the existence of camp orchestras. Above the gates of the camps was inscribed the slogan 'Labour is a matter of honour, courage and heroism'. The isolated nature of the Kolyma region and the harsh climate meant that there was virtually no chance of escape. Nevertheless, some desperate prisoners did try to break out. One such attempt was made by a group of Vlasov soldiers who made a mass escape under the leadership of a former lieutenant-colonel, Yanovsky. They managed to seize weapons and shoot a number of guards and soldiers, but were all eventually tracked down and killed.

Conquest reserves some of his harshest scorn for Western dupes of the Soviets, who visited the Kolyma region and for whose benefit the camps were rapidly cleaned up to provide a more satisfactory impression. Two such visitors were the US Vice-President Henry Wallace and Owen Lattimore. Wallace in his book *Soviet Asian Mission* described the gold miners of Kolyma as 'pioneers of the machine age, builders of cities', while Lattimore in an article in *National Geographic* magazine claimed that the NKVD agency *Dalstroy* 'can be roughly compared to a combination of the Hudson Bay Company and the TVA'. Wallace was subsequently to express regret for his gullibility, but as late as 1968 Lattimore was still trying to justify himself, writing to this paper, 'Is it assumed that a visit of this kind affords an ideal opportunity to snoop on one's hosts?' (NS 18 October 1968).

It is difficult not to agree with Conquest's conclusions. He points out that deportation to Siberia was a traditional Tsarist punishment for political prisoners and ordinary criminals. But both in the numbers involved and in the way they were treated, Stalin's handling of the prisoners of the Gulag archipelago was incomparably harsher than anything committed by his Tsarist predecessors. He maintains that the Kolyma camp network was not an aberration of Stalinism or

> a mere negative attribute of that system. On the contrary, it was that system carried to its logical end. Kolyma – the threat and actuality of Kolyma – was the way the Soviet Government imposed itself on its subjects.

Until the horror of what was perpetrated by Stalin is openly acknowledged by the Soviet authorities, as was starting to happen under Krushchev, there is little hope of any meaningful democratisation in the USSR.

Also published this week:

The Professor of Desire by Philip Roth (Cape £4.50), which was reviewed in our American Books number of January 13.

Harold Beaver

If Dogs Could Read

Jack: A Biography of Jack London by ANDREW SINCLAIR *Weidenfeld* £6.95

It is difficult to take Jack London seriously. The Russians still read him. Youngsters may still read him. But the reputation of this Californian adventurer, war correspondent and self-styled socialist has steadily dwindled since the heady days of his world-wide sales 60 years ago. He made more than a million dollars by his writing. He was the last pulp author of genius, before the rise of Hollywood, to feed the dreams and passions of the literate masses. A crude disciple of Kipling, he fathered a hollow archetype: the virile American as man of letters, perpetuated over two further generations by Hemingway, Kerouac and Mailer.

The Kipling of the Klondike they called him, or the Bret Harte of the Yukon. For it was the Alaskan foray of 1897-98 that provided the pay-dirt for the rest of his literary career. Yet it was his experience as an 18-year-old hobo that provided far more telling clues. In the spring of 1894 he had jumped the freight cars out of Oakland to follow Kelly's army of the unemployed. The aim was to join Jacob Coxey's army in their march on Washington. Arrested for vagrancy in Buffalo, however, he landed 30 days in jail. That was his first contact with what he was to call the 'Social Pit' or, in his sketch of London's East End, the 'Abyss'. 'I was no spring chicken in the ways of the world', he recorded 13 years later,

> and the awful abysses of human degradation. It would take a deep plummet to reach bottom in the Erie County Pen . . . filled with the ruck and the filth, the scum and the dregs, of society – hereditary inefficients, degenerates, wrecks, lunatics, addled intelligences, epileptics, monsters, weaklings, in short, a very nightmare of humanity.

Cleverly he befriended an old lag who became (in the slang) his 'meat'. This old lag had him appointed a trusty within two days, one of 13 'hall men' who exploited the 500 prisoners. Explicit sexuality, as always in Jack London, is undercut. But his record of that time, *The Road* (1907), is dedicated to Josiah Flynt; and Flynt did reveal the truth about hobo life for Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*, bought by London for his library.

In 'Homosexuality Among Tramps' Flynt declared that one in ten of the 60,000 professional tramps was an invert. Such men would pick up slum boys between the ages of 10 and 15 and seduce them into travelling the road. The boys were called 'prushuns'; their masters, 'jockers'. Jack London was careful to dissociate himself from such trade. In his chapter on 'Road-Kids and Gay-Cats' he states:

> I was never a prushun, for I did not take kindly to possession. I was first a road-kid and then a profesh . . . And be it known, here and now, that the profesh are the aristocracy of The Road. They are the lords and masters, the aggressive men, the primordial noblemen, the *blond beasts* . . .

What London was claiming surreptitiously is that he was never a sexual underdog, never a pariah, never part of this sterile wasteland, but a blond aggressor, the primordial beast. The image is determinedly butch. As it will remain, whether snooping in Whitechapel among the tarts and muggers of the Commercial Road, or roistering in the South Seas. The macho Californian speaks for the misfits, the oppressed; the proto-fascist for the scavengers of the jungle. Though superficially akin to George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Jack London's descent into the Abyss (equipped with camera and housed with a police detective) is more like a photo-journalist's search for copy. For he knows what awaits the sluggish, drab, stunted dross of the capitalist machine. Again and again, from *The Call of the Wild* to *The People of the Abyss*, Jack London rehearsed his parables of oppression, of domestication, and of retrogression to the wilderness. In his Wellsian fantasy, *The Iron Heel*, his role switches to that of blond superman as terrorist. But it is typical of his vision (and his most potent legacy) that for him the golden age of socialism could dawn only 300 years after a successful fascist revolution.

Jack London, on a later visit to the Marquesas, made a point of riding out to Melville's valley of the Typees. Like Melville, he too had lived among sailors, tramps and

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prisoners. But unlike Melville he had turned that experience into nothing but adventure stories and socialist lectures. He had learned 'to be tolerant of homosexuality', writes Andrew Sinclair cautiously; 'but he remained a woman's man and never seems to have slept voluntarily with men . . . Jack would never bring himself to write that book or the truth of his experiences on the road'. He merely wrote off 'The Tramp' as the sterile organic waste, like the prostitute, of a capitalist society.

Yet his heroes (Wolf Larsen and Burning Daylight), as Maurice Magnus observed as early as 1911, were themselves curiously innocent of women: brute force is translated to brutes, or deserts human culture altogether for the wolf pack. Multiple killings and sadistic deaths are a hallmark of his fiction. 'When he gloated over violence,' writes Sinclair, 'as in *South Sea Tales*, his disgust was at the world, not at women. His horror was of his own flesh, not female bodies.' But the poet Kenneth Rexroth put it in truer perspective:

> There's no question but what his relations with George Sterling were as homosexual as could be. Whether they found overt expression is of no moment. They were sufficiently comprehensive in their only moderately covert form. Similarly, his relations with women, both in life and in fiction, have been described enough times as persistent refusal to accept woman as anything but a deformed boy. London practically invented the heroine as Good Chum. The homosexuality is not the point but the immaturity is. There are simply no adults anywhere in London's fiction. It is impossible to take seriously sea captains, goldminers, entrepreneurs, revolutionary leaders who behave like newsboys, playground bullies and Eagle Scouts.

He married twice: first, a loveless match as 'Daddy-Boy' to 'Mother-Girl'; next a comradely romp as 'man-boy' with 'mate-woman'. Charmian (disguised as Saxon in *The Valley of the Moon*), who fenced and boxed and tumbled in the surf with him, became his Eternal Kid. It was to Charmian that he confessed his dream of the 'Man-Comrade': 'This man should be so much one with me that we could never misunderstand. He should love the flesh, as he should the spirit, honoring and loving each and giving each its due . . .' That man was the whimsical poet (of *A Wine of Wizardry* and *The House of Orchids*), George Sterling. Sterling was 'Greek' to London's 'Wolf'. He became, in Sinclair's phrase, 'the third love of Jack's life'.

Jack London's cult was that of the male body – his own perfect body. He had pictures taken of himself in bathing costume, flexing his muscles. He wrestled and boxed in the nude. He took naked snapshots of George Sterling. Sinclair himself falls under the spell: 'The brow, the nose, the contour of the cheeks, the massive throat, were like those of a Greek statue, while the body gave an impression of grace and athletic strength.' Surf-riding in Hawaii, he became 'a sun-burned, skin-peeling Mercury' on the breakers. The posing, the sadism, the masochism – down to the final suicide – are all too reminiscent of Yukio Mishima. Though Sinclair casts doubts on the legitimacy of the verdict, that injected overdose of morphine was more than accidental. London believed that he was in the tertiary stage of syphilis; that he had a tumour on the brain. Aged 40, he was disgusted with his impotent body, bloated by drink and arsenic poisoning, racked by piles and psoriasis. His alcoholism he had broadcast bravely in *John Barleycorn* (1913); the suicide was prefigured at the end of *Martin Eden* (1909). George Sterling committed suicide ten years later.

Lycanthropic to the end, by the burned-out shell of Wolf House, London sat gobbling raw fish and two blood-red wild ducks a day. For he never resolved the tension between his cult of virility and married love; nor that between his pose of Nietzschean superman and Marxist revolutionary. He believed in 'socialism through natural selection'; or, as Sinclair again puts it, in 'the aristocrats of the working class dragging the proletariat upward into a Socialist government'. He wanted to be both the lone wolf, that is, and the leader of the pack. Lecturing at Harvard in 1905, he declared: 'I speak, and I *think*, of these assassins in Russia as "my comrades".' Yet it was not London but Harvard's own John Reed who rode with Villa's guerrillas across Chihuahua; it was Reed who was to be buried under the walls of the Kremlin. London remained the blond beast, preaching imperialism as the vanguard of the proletarian revolution: for him 'the survival of the fittest race must precede the victory of the fittest proletariat'; and white was fittest. His racism was unabashed, aimed at 'black' and 'brown', 'red' and 'yellow' aboriginals alike. Himself a bastard, he boasted of his Nordic blood. Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills* was debased to such racist formulas as *Adventure* and *South Sea Tales*. Increasingly not even his plots were original. He was openly charged with plagiarism. 'Expression with me,' he replied, 'is far easier than invention.'

Andrew Sinclair's expression too is fluent enough. He is the first to have had unrestricted access to Jack London's journals, letters and papers. Though four books on London have already appeared in the 1970s, this record correcting the family chronicles of widow and daughter was well worth presenting. But it is a paean written in Jack London's own self-image and very voice. The San Francisco Bay becomes 'the vast sea-shell of the waters pent within the inlet through the Golden Gate'; the 'proud American boy' becomes a 'footloose child'. The critical spectacles, too, are as rainbow-coloured as the prose. Neither the imperialism, nor the racism, nor spurious socialism, nor ambiguous sexuality are decisively confronted; nor, what is worse, the ultimate vulgarity. Instead the label 'mythopoetic magnificence' is hung around his neck, with this apologia: 'It was inevitable because he could no longer evolve, thus evolution condemned his works.' Sinclair's final praise of *Before Adam* and *White Fang* as the harbingers of 'sociobiology' (that pseudo-science of Robert Ardrey and Desmond Morris) is as ludicrous as the comparison with Lévi-Strauss and Chomsky. I prefer Rexroth's conclusion: 'So London's best stories are about dogs. I, as a man, think they're better, but maybe if dogs could read, they'd think they were kind of silly.'

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John Sutherland

Coming Out Top

The Oxford University Press: An Informal History by PETER SUTCLIFFE *Oxford* £6.75

For most of its 500 years OUP has been the least mobile weathervane in the British booktrade. There is something emblematic in the image given us at one point in Peter Sutcliffe's history of the Press personnel crouching under the protective shelter of 6,000 unbound and unsold sets of the OED, waiting for the German bombs to fall. Publishing is an inherently conservative business, but this publisher has been tied to a reactionary institution and for much of its modern career was run by nostalgic and often superannuated academics ('Delegates' who, as one Secretary observed, would do anything rather than delegate). With so much dead weight to carry the OUP has tended to resist all but the irresistible forces for change. Yet not only has the Press survived, it has triumphed. Its demi-millennial *feu de joie* is well justified by the latest trading figures. With a 1976-77 turnover of getting on for £50 million, a profit-to-turnover ratio of 14 per cent, a 70 per cent export rate and its unrivalled academic prestige, it has fulfilled Charles Cannan's imperial ambition to make the Clarendon Press 'what it ought to be: the first Press in the world'. Nowhere is Quiller-Couch's maxim that 'if it comes to the mere ability in handling affairs the man with Greek will always come out top' better demonstrated than in this history of the Press's formative years of growth. Perhaps Cowley would have done better by following its neighbour's example, rather than the technologico-Benthamites who have made Leyland the worst motor manufacturer in Europe.

Peter Sutcliffe's fascinating and urbane history concentrates on the period 1860-1945. There is some convenience in this restriction. The very early history of the Press is incompletely recorded and does not lend itself to informal, anecdotal narrative. The very recent history is rather too sensitive for a celebratory volume. Nonetheless, there is a satisfying unity in the phase of the Press's career which Sutcliffe has selected here. It was in the 1860s that the Press made its crucial adjustment to the modern business world by setting up its London 'Publisher' and by appointing a salaried 'Secretary' to the Delegates, to carry out a similar function at the Oxford end. This conscious diversification represented a determination to live and profit by the ineradicable contradictions in its make-up. Like the institution whose name it bears (but whose property it is not) OUP has grown powerful by virtue of given privileges (originally the licence to print bibles) and an educational role which it did not create for itself but which it fell heir to by being a developed institution at the right time. Not least, and like the University again, the Press has retained its academic autonomy by coming to a canny accommodation with capitalism and commerce.

To some extent all successful yet high-minded publishers do what OUP has done, justifying themselves with the axiom that bad books pay for good. And certainly OUP has never published anything it need be ashamed of; even in its most aggressively commercial moments it has never gone as far as George Smith, of Smith, Elder and Co., who subsidised *his* good books by the franchise for Apollinaris mineral water. (Smith it was, incidentally, who gave OUP the *Dictionary of National Biography*. It was, Humphrey Milford conceded, a white elephant, 'but that is the sort of animal that ought to be in our stable'.) The peculiarly constrained yet dogged quality of OUP's mammonism is well expressed in Kenneth Sisam's pious observation that 'we have to make a little money where we decently can in these difficult days to pay for more learned books'. The money has always been made, and decency has always been preserved.

The dualistic nature of the modern Press's operation has not been easy to live with, and Sutcliffe vividly presents the conscientious agonies of a succession of Secretaries and Publishers. Yet the main aim, that of patronising learned books in a disinterested spirit, has been gloriously achieved. One of the many incidental illuminations to be found in this informal history is how the notion of what constitutes proper scholarship has turned about over the last 100 years. During the 19th century learning was the fruit of mature, not to say ancient minds. Modern, and particularly post-war, learning is typically the product of youth. The bright young man has replaced the omniscient Shavian long-liver. Sutcliffe rightly attributes this revolution to the PhD thesis (the 'alien thesis' as he once calls it). The doctorate is the great work done before rather than after entry into full academic life, and it dominates modern academic appointments. What, one wonders, would Mark Pattison have made of today's whippersnapper dons and college professors hell-bent on making it before 30? And for all the benign tolerance of his account, one detects in Sutcliffe himself a congeniality with the great age of mature Oxford scholarship which raised those massive monuments to the well-stored mind – the dictionaries, classical texts, anthologies, 'Companions' and 'Histories'. If there is a fall in OUP's latter career, I suspect that the author would locate it not in the accommodation with the London publishing world in the 1860s but in the capitulation to the American thesis in the 1960s.

This book can be profitably read as many things: business history, cultural history, intellectual history. But its main appeal for the general reader at whom it is aimed lies in the portrait gallery of Oxford types which it contains. These range from the zany and the phoney to the truly heroic. They are all deftly and economically evoked in the short semi-chapters Sutcliffe favours: James Murray in his scriptorium, out lexiconning Webster ten to one; Walter Raleigh, matily apostrophising Bill Blake, Bill Wordsworth and (their biggest earner) Bill Shakespeare; the Fowlers (of *English Usage*) who, though pacifist and grossly over-age (Henry was in his mid-fifties), enlisted in the first world war, desperate to sacrifice themselves at the front. (Wise medical officers kept them from the fray, though Frank, pathetically, died of consumption.) It is not the most entertaining, but the most analytic and corrective of these pocket biographies is that Lyttleton Gell, the first and only 'outsider' the Delegates appointed as Secretary. From 1884-98 Gell waged war against 'theoretical Academic amateurs' and conceived his task as that of bringing off the 'dead lift' by which the Press would be brought into the modern publishing world. He conceived himself bitterly frustrated, but the subsequent narrative of Sutcliffe's book shows his vision as posthumously fulfilled.

In-house publishing history is not a particularly dignified or ambitious critical genre (who, after all, could be critical on a 500th anniversary?). But for all its readability and ostentatious omission of apparatus, Peter Sutcliffe has produced a book which does no discredit to the venerable scholarly tradition it celebrates.

David Harsent

Mr Punch on Location

Hill country in rainy weather,
all other sounds subdued
by the hoarseness of water in the throat of
the valley,

until the sky silvers and light swills the grass
like the glow in a green bowl.
Some women are bunched

by a fringe of dripping trees at the
valley's lip,
packed like a herd,
their children mute and clinging; as it was

before the fruity heat of kitchens, before
the symmetry of gardens, the stealth
of embroidery, before marriage.

He sees the great canvasses animate at last,
Diana grazed by lust,
the Bacchae yelling and feeding off flesh . . .

His field-glasses catch blood on a chin,
the long, hard muscle in a naked thigh
flexing and bunching,

dark caps of hair
barbered with a knife and oiled.
They find the best in nature, stay alive

through everything, sleep when they can.
They're Punch's flock. He wrote the script
for this.

He brings the cameras on.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

John Coleman

The World Well Lost

Ai No Corrida *Gate Film Club*
That Obscure Object of Desire (X) *Academy One*
The Goodbye Girl (A) *Warner West End 2*
A Special Day (AA) *Studio 3*

Nagisa Oshima's *Ai No Corrida* might best be described, and is as such welcomed, as an honest Japanese re-working of the dishonest hard core of Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris*. I saw it first at the 1976 London Film Festival, when it was called *Empire of the Senses* (the new title was always apparently in the director's mind and means 'Corrida of Love'), and admired it: the running and largely couchant theme is extreme sexual obsession, the ways of a man with a woman and vice versa. Oshima's well-made, adult film lets one count the ways without the cinematic equivalent of asterisks. Based – as a voice quietly relates at the end – on an incident that made Japanese headlines back in 1936, where a woman had wandered the streets for four days, holding the severed genitalia of her lover, the piece unwaveringly plots the growth of an erotic passion to that peak, or trough, where both partners count the world well lost. Its principals, and this is a mad duet for two bodies, are Sada, first seen as a bewildered young slavey and whore, and Kichizo, moustached man about the house where she works, allowed to drink only on the premises by the jealous wife-madam he pleasures. But on home ground Kichizo seems to have the run of the place. In a film which makes a recurrent occasion of eavesdropping (echoing our relation to it via half-shocked geishas, an old woman outside as they go to it in a doorway), Sada first peeps at him in action with the lady-boss and is soon in the saddle herself.

What follows rings all the changes on a bed-locked honeymoon. They move, as it were, in a trance of lust from one mesmerised coupling, the rooms changing yet all the same, to another; cleaning-wenches complain in vain; meals go uneaten. That outside world has its unique chance when a squad of soldiers, preparing for war, goes one way, the by now in thrall Kichizo blindly in the opposite direction. It is desperately difficult for a complex Westerner to understand the simplicities of Oriental manners, but Oshima cunningly establishes one thing beyond doubt: his interlocked lovers break every simpering, permissive convention of their shifting environment. They invite and relish opprobrium, the more together through their mounting capacity to outrage. Alike in bad, semi-orphaned backgrounds, they create their foreground wilfully, Sada now and then taking an old professorial lay for money, Kichizo – in a harsh scene – embracing an aged geisha, whose subsequent swoon recalls to him his mother. No holds are barred and there can be no happy ending. A strangulation game, started as a means of increasing the racking boons of lust ('If I live alone with you forever, you'll make a real skeleton of me,' grins Kichizo), links with some jealous knife-play of Sada's: the severance is invited, brutal, final.

Whether it is moral (I can see an uninteresting way in which it is) may prove important to some. Should *Ai No Corrida* come under attack from the forces of saccharine and blight, there is the awful possibility that another oldie may be invoked in its defence: it's art. Some of the postures will recall those naughty prints by Utamaro and Hokusai, okay names; and the dreaded André Pieyre de Mandiargues will be wheeled on (onward into Bataille?) to make a rosy crucifixion of it all, taking all the French leave his ambiguous native tongue allows. So much would be to obfuscate a simple issue. May not grown-ups see a film saturated in sex, a film about being lost in lust which is yet unlikely after its first reel to inspire much (and, if it did, what harm?), without having their human rites impugned? How long before it is accepted that the missionary position is not the only one? And, with the screens full of folks anonymously gunning, gassing, bombing their fellows to perdition, one can think of worse ways to die than in an agreed one-to-one derangement, a *dérèglement* of that private empire of the senses.

Deaf to all ears but his own, Luis Buñuel goes implacably on making his last film. *That Obscure Object of Desire*, from a Pierre Louys novel, *La Femme et Le Pantin*, finds the master at his most characteristic: not giving a damn for either his source or us. Fernando Rey (dubbed by Michel Piccoli) keeps it in the uneasy Buñuel family, playing a wealthy, ageing Frenchman doting on a fatal girl, Conchita, first met as a pretty maid hired by his valet. In his most disquieting quirk, the great misdirector has his Spanish Conchita enacted by two whimsically switched beauties, Carole Bouquet and Angela Molina, the first cool, the second earthy. It says much for Buñuel's built-up credit that you wonder for a while if your eyes deceive you: it is the probable point of his film, whose bland surrealism matter-of-factly cons one as of old, that dapper, diligent Mathieu (Rey) himself fails to note the twinning. The cynical implication would be he *is* in love with love and, the state once achieved, omits to scrutinise the object of his affections. (What colour are your wife's eyes?) There is a languidly pursued visual gag about a sack, which may or may not relate to a quote from the steely valet ('Woman is a bag of excrement') which sounds like something from an early church father and would thus cause a stir in those still interested in Buñuel's hard-bought anti-clericalism.

Mathieu chases his Conchita, a maybe virgin, to Seville and back, narrating most of the pursuit and its assorted indignities to a fascinated, smug group of fellow train-travellers. Mild muggings ('800 francs only'), terrorist bulletins over the radio, dousing buckets of water, bombs and a conclusive, enigmatic explosion punctuate and puncture the actions. The whole event is absorbing while it lasts, an entertainment, but reads old news. That concussed style of the master's, leaving one with the guilty sense of having missed something crucial, is here just style: personal, self-plagiarising.

'You will, Oscar, you will.' One trusts not with a couple of weirdly over-nominated entries. Herbert Ross's *The Goodbye Girl*, from a *happy* Neil Simon script owing much (they say) to its author's re-marriage to one of its stars, Marsha Mason, is about heartbroken lady with wisecracking 10-year-old daughter (Quinn Cummings) finding hurlyburly happiness with health-food-freak actor (Richard Dreyfuss). An ace at one-liners, Mr Simon serves fault after fault when he tries paragraphs. Sickeningly maimed by dubbing is Ettore Scola's *A Special Day*, an extremely elegant-looking two-hander for Loren and Mastroianni set in May 1938, when Hitler met Mussolini. The period, rendered through a concierge's loudspeaker broadcasting the celebrations and a marvellously reduced print (only reds and greens wanly coming through) is speaking: the brief encounter of the unlikely pair would have been better dumb.

Opera

Eric Sams

To the Sacrifice

Idomeneo *Covent Garden*

This first Covent Garden performance offered the inspired choice of Mozart as musical assistant to Götz Friedrich's new production, with sets and costumes by Stefanos Lazaridis. That's not a wholly unfair way of putting it; the score itself was first designed and produced as an aid to stage action and spectacle. A typical first-night review of 1781 enthused solely about the scene-painting, as though opera were the equivalent of going to the pictures. If so, Mozart contributed film-music of genius. Sweeping orchestral brush-strokes fill in the coloured expanses of Ocean and Heaven, which unite and contrast in the C minor of Storm and the E major of Calm. All the musical ideas sound similarly generalised; arias as well as recitatives (admirably accompanied by John Constable) assume allegorical attitudes of Awe, Sacrifice, Love, Despair and so on. How apt

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that the modern inheritors of that heavily-capitalised vocabulary, namely the great Insurance Companies, should stand sponsor to the present production, which covers such notable hazards as Shipwreck, Risks from Sea-Serpents, and other Acts of Neptune.

It is soon evident that King Idomeneus of Crete has adopted the wrong policy. His ship is tempest-tossed on return from Troy. Like a true legendary hero, he is ready to save his own skin by offering to sacrifice the first person to hand – a practice that persists to this day. In this version, the first person is his son, Idamantes. Affection prevails, and the vow is broken. The thwarted Neptune causes the Cretan coasts to be ravaged by a monster, which is duly slain by the brave young prince. His life is once again forfeit, this time for impiety. As he is about to be beheaded by his loving father, the captive Trojan princess Ilia offers her own life instead. Neptune, a notoriously fluctuating character, thereupon relents, and stipulates merely that Idomeneo should abdicate and be succeeded by Idamantes and Ilia. Instead of losing their heads they gain a joint crown.

As we know from his letters, the young Mozart showed great respect for the Abbé Varesco's stilted and stereotyped text, and strove to illuminate it with musical illustrations. But the book remains so obdurately blank that commentators and producers alike have understandably sought to read meanings into it by reference to, for example, documentary biography (Mozart family relationships), Christianity (love rising triumphant over death), Freud (Oedipal love-hate between father and son, the latter already a castrato), and Marx (the revolutionary overthrow of a despotic regime).

At least the music was convincingly interpreted. At first hearing, the score seems to be expressing everything in general terms and hence saying nothing in particular. But further listening brings a strong impression of banked fires, as if heated feelings were being deliberately repressed. Perhaps only dedicated specialists can penetrate to this inner warmth and life. For them, *Idomeneo* will then be found to contain 'Mozart's most sublime operatic music'. Thus Colin Davis, under whose direction the orchestra spoke out eloquently in support of that highly debation notion. It may be more than mere coincidence that Berlioz and Tippett, also much admired by the Music Director, have themselves drawn inspiration from the Trojan War—an apt enough image for a calm classical surface with hidden fires beneath. Dame Janet Baker's recent Lieder-interpretation has something of the same quality; and her comparatively cool account of Idamante had sudden flares of intensity, like her 1976 Cressida (another Trojan war veteran).

Thus far it was clear that conviction could redeem or even transcend convention. But I felt that too much of the stage business was counter-productive. Götz Friedrich has been rightly admired for his way of opening out operas to show their wider human and social significance. But *Idomeneo* has so much more beauty than significance that the social points were not just stressed but strained. Mozart's Idamante would hardly have cast off crown and mantle at his coronation, however desirably democratic that gesture may now appear. Socialist realism surely suggests that life would still be tough for the toilers, even under the new enlightened regime. Even when Idom. is amended to Idam., as one edition calls them, it still means Iden for the proof Cretans. The most puzzling feature of all was that Ilia's rival Electra was suddenly required to kill herself, to her own evident distress and the unfeigned discomfiture of the other characters. This seemed either an unreasonably harsh judgment of a quite distinguished debut, or else an unduly liberal interpretation of the stage direction 'exit'. On the whole I thought that the imposing music was not well served by such imposed effects.

Television

Julian Barnes

Surrey Side Up

The reason everyone enjoyed the Boat Race so much this year was, of course, because it was fixed. And why not? A little pre-match monkeying has perked up professional wrestling no end, and nobody would deny that the annual riverine procession needed enlivening. It was always over by Hammersmith Bridge (if not by the time the gold sovereign hit the tarmac), and since 1960 no crew had won it by less than three-and-a-quarter lengths. This year, too, £10,000 in sponsorship money had been lavished on the event. So the BBC, a ruthless corporation prepared to subvert even *Round Britain Quiz* (contestants get the questions an hour beforehand), clearly ordered *Grandstand* (BBC-1) to pull out the big one; after all, things had got so bad that the other side didn't need to do anything more than run a contemptuously routine 'ITV Seven'. Frank Bough and his men duly obliged. 'All week we've been talking about a sinker,' chirruped a confident Frank during his give-away warm-up; and Al Shealy, Oxford's American No. 6, tactlessly predicted, 'We're going to grind them right down into the water'. The deal evidently was 'Last man to Barnes Bridge does the decent thing', and the 'false start' a Cambridge ploy to gain time, allow the water to get choppier, and thus make their pulling the plug on themselves look less like incompetent watermanship. Even so, the short-straw look on the faces of the Cambridge eight as they gurgled down in polite resignation told you all you needed to know.

There was, this year, one technical innovation: a mike attached to the Cambridge cox. 'Full length now . . .' he crooned after his sneaky stake-boat flier, 'Reach out . . . reach out in the muddy water . . . a couple of men down now . . .' A smart idea – though it only lasted a dozen strokes, and radio contact was broken off at the cox's first hortatory 'Bloody'. Yet even this wasn't what it seemed: radios, after all, work both ways. As Cambridge went under, Jim Railton talked knowingly about the 'dolphin effect'. Dolphins, of course, communicate with each other in ways beyond the perception of man; so, in sponsored sports, the 'dolphin effect' refers to the concealed radio link between game director and contestants. As Railton all too rightly observed, the 'effect' leads to a 'sinking situation', and may even produce a 'drowning problem'. But that, I suppose, would be taking the ratings war a bit too far.

There was another easy Oxford row-over in *The Big Word Machine*, BBC-2's tribute to the quincentenary of the OUP. Television is reverential enough about books themselves, without extending its kneeling position to the publishing industry as well. The OUP, according to John Sandilands's script, is still 'resolutely low-key in the matter of self-advertisement'. Maybe; but it clearly doesn't need to be raucous if its current posture can secure 40 minutes' free publicity like this.

No viewer would accept a programme about a car manufacturer in which all the facts and opinions came from those who worked for it; so why the distinction here? We were serenaded by begowned Delegates, management mumblingly agreeing with one another, Anthony Quinton, and a quartet of young execs round a gaudy bar resolutely not compromising their futures. The agreed themes were that the OUP was holy because it published some books at a loss, and that its operations showed a blend of the very best of the amateur and professional spirits. When I worked for OUP, the other side of each of these spirits was normally pretty visible as well; and besides, would any other publisher, given such a backlist, do less well? You might also have noticed that, apart from the house lexicographers, there wasn't an author on view.

Coincidentally, the next day *The Book Programme* saved the channel's face by showing in what terms publishing can be discussed. Different people were actually allowed to express different opinions about the energetic and irascible Victor Gollancz; and, extraordinary as it might seem, the references to his famous meanness (like not showing you the menu at the Savoy to encourage you to have the set lunch) and his professional misjudgments (turning down *Animal Farm* for fear it might offend the Soviet Union) made the man more real and his success more impressive. This was the last *Book Programme* of a very lively series (the previous week, for instance, had Robinson, Muggeridge and Frederic Raphael being refreshingly sceptical about *The Human Factor*). *Caught in Time* (BBC-2), James Cameron's eerie home-movie series, also ended, with some typically creepy Thirties footage of *Japanese* boy scouts, and air-raid wardens washing London streets as if after a gas attack. A lighter, if still unnerving level of creepiness inhabited LWT's kiddie-porn spectacular *Lena and Bonnie*: Lena Zavaroni (14 going on 17) and Bonnie Langford (13 going on 8) went through specially-written all-singing, all-dancing, all-clothes-changing routines, miming emotions they cannot know and grinding pelvises in a way which, one trusts, still reminds them of nothing else. This show will have given them horrible Broadway ambitions; in the case of our own Bonnie, whose voice does to your ears what very burnt toast does to your tongue, swift disabusal is necessary.

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Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Tanks a Lot

Zigomania *Bush*
Mr Director *Orange Tree, Richmond*

Tony Bicat's *Devil's Island*, seen at the Royal Court last year, suggested that by the turn of the century we will have been reduced to a race of zonked-out goons, living in underground car-parks and eating any rats or dogs we are lucky enough to scavenge; and his new *Zigomania* concerns what one might suppose to be a major milestone on the stony road to that glum destination. At any rate, it is set in Paris in May 1968, a crucial date on any Jeremiah's calendar, be his inclinations radical or reactionary. The main character is an English drummer of somewhat improbable naïvety ('Molière, Flaubert, Voltaire,' he mumbles as he settles down in a left-bank café, 'it's a big thrill'), who is trying to secure a job in what gradually becomes a battlefield. He befriends two sisters, one of whom suffers from the presumably symbolic affliction of the title, a compulsion to smile fixedly whatever her external circumstances or internal feelings, and has fallen rather bleakly in love with a student militant. This sexless and cerebral boy does his bit at the barricades, the girl attempts suicide, the drummer is swiped over the head by some marauding gendarme, and the conclusion is – well, what?

Nothing very substantial, I fear. Compare Mr Bicat's discussion of the events of May with the prolonged one mounted in Trevor Griffiths's *The Party*, and it quickly becomes clear that he is not interested in making historical sense of them. His aim is rather to show the impact of public happenings on private lives: what people of (on the whole) no great political sophistication must have felt when the tear-gas began to waft through the keyhole and the blood to trickle under the door. The English musician tries, and fails, to remain uninvolved. The café's morose factotum, a resistance fighter who betrayed his comrades after six days of torture, yanks off his clothes and runs amok with a broken bottle. The proprietor's wife, a gaunt battleaxe of uncertain age, offhandedly announces that she is, in fact, a German tank-officer who changed sex after the war. As you see, self-revelation and self-exposure are in the smoky French air, and, as you are no doubt beginning to suspect, it tends to be more sensational and lapel-grabbing than trenchant or true. Moreover, the excitement, fear and confusion of the streets outside is mostly rather less than palpable. Anthony Sher gives a nice, diffident performance as a British Candide on the periphery of someone else's Agincourt, Veronica Quilligan keeps her increasingly distraught grin taped safely in place, and, if Janet Henfrey feels any discomfort at being cast as one of Rommel's more hulking lieutenants, she doesn't show it; but the chessboard on which these pawns are jostling is made of cardboard, and they themselves have been carved from something smoother and more tractable than flesh and bone.

A recurrent emphasis of the school of young, left-leaning playwrights of which Bicat is (I suppose) an apprentice member is that our own public servants are no less capable of atrocity than the police in France or, for that matter, in South Africa, Chile, or Eastern Europe. In Howard Barker's *Claw* a troublemaker is done to death in a bath in one of those psychiatric hospitals that are supposed to exist only in the Soviet Union; and in the same author's *That Good Between Us* there is another bureaucratic drowning, this time offshore and at the behest of a liberal Home Secretary seemingly modelled on Mrs Shirley Williams. I don't know whether Fay Weldon has seen either of these pieces, but she clearly shares their suspicion of Westminster and Whitehall, one at least of which must have sanctioned the cruel and unusual punishment her *Mr Director* imagines being dished out in an approved school in some unspecified corner of our clammy island. A 14-year-old motorway hooker, pronounced 'unruly' by the courts, is shut up in a soundless, lightless box in the hope that, three weeks later, she will emerge passive and compliant, ready to take her place at the sink and over the oven. Only the intervention of an eager-beaver journalist stops the experiment.

The first and obvious objection is that there's no reason to suppose that the DHSS is reforming the children in its care by methods most decent people would equate with torture. The second is that, if it were, it would presumably be careful to choose more reliable torturers than a man lately convicted of sexual assault and a woman of pronounced lesbian proclivities and, given the eagerness with which she alternately freezes and boils her captives, of more than average vindictiveness. Miss Weldon does, it's true, attempt to humanise her child-care fascists, and has some success with a director of social services happiest when he's pottering among his tomato plants; but too much of the evidence has been tilted by Dame Paranoia, working in collaboration with her old friend, Little Miss Sentimentality. We're told that a grim background and upbringing has made the child-victim uncontrollable. All we actually observe of her is a knack for upsetting her elders with unusually precise and unnaturally articulate home-truths. She represents frankness and freedom, they dishonesty and sexual oppression, a moral set-up which allows Miss Weldon to conclude that the girl is, in fact, unwilling to emerge from her electronic coffin – 'I rather like being blind, because I ask myself, what did you ever give me to see?' It is a cry that might more plausibly have gone up from the audience.

Christopher Reid

Low Life

These crusty pensioners love to fool
like tiny tots, around
their sunset-citizens' paddling-pool:

obliged to haul about on stumps,
yet strong enough to contend
with mountainous piggybacks on
their humps –

such heavy old men of the sea – they slide,
inch by inch, under
the water, as if intent to hide;

or stop awhile and stretch for breath –
each sinewy neck strained
like a marathon-champion's – waiting
for death.

But why have all these maundering water-
turtle suddenly turned
up here in the city's immigrant quarter?

Who is this cayman, who never blinks?
And why is the fishmonger's window
heaped with silvery cosh-tailed skinks?

Ever since the seven Crocodile
brothers were finally drowned
last week in the river – every smile

sewn-up in a well-fed zigzag – things
have been easier. Snakes unwind
all over the floor like ribbons and strings,

or shimmer like livers. Terrapins cram
the sink for days on end . . .
Our pythoness, a one-time femme

fatale, keeps hoisting up her long
plum-stippled lamé stocking, pondering
fine distinctions of right and wrong.

This English

The misuse of 'enormity' is an enormity to which we have all become accustomed. We follow with a couple of nob's pronouns – easily the most humiliating of all syntactical slips, in my view. I loved it when John Hawks, the American novelist, closed one of his more pretentious novels with a soaring coda which began: 'I shall dream of she who . . . ' 'Her' wouldn't have been nearly as poetic, would it? £3 token for first entry, £2 for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ According to the players, they were up-tight for an hour and sat there like survivors of a blitz, unaware of the enormity of their achievement. **Clem Thomas** *Observer* (Harvey Cole)

☐ . . . others tempted to become large-scale manufacturers and traffickers might well consider the risk worth taking, bearing in mind the enormity of the rewards which could accrue. **Leader** *The Times* (R. J. Carwardine)

☐ Have I not read somewhere that 'God helps he who helps himself'? **C. I. Rycroft** *The Times* (Mrs K. F. A. Johnston)

☐ Cartoons and cartoonists are appealing subjects, especially for we British who can justifiably claim to have produced more and better cartoonists than any other nation. **Richard Ingrams** *Books and Bookmen* (Anon)

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Weekend Competition

No 2508 **Set by W. J. Webster**

Time for another Graham Greene comp, but with a difference. During the last few weeks, it seems, the author of *The Human Factor* has been interviewed by everyone in the literary world with the exception of himself. So despatch G. G. to Antibes to grill the *maître*; 150 words max; by 14 April.

Result of No 2505
Set by Farouche Features

We asked you to McGonagallise any well-known lyric.

Report **by Fatboy**

Thanks to our Penguin Books Sponsorship Scheme, there were caseloads of copies of Spike Milligan's fanciful biography of McGonagall riding on this one, and the extra incentive certainly worked. A few of you got stuck trotting out your Ogden Nash imitations by mistake – failing to convey the essential soft-headedness of the Dundee linester. Generally, though, you kept to a very high standard: eight pounds and a bio to those printed. Consolation prizes too: a Penguin to Parrott (we couldn't very well not, could we?), also to Diana Boyes, Joyce Johnson and Alan Brownjohn.

Although Michaelmas Daisies bloom for a
very long time
Especially in soil which has been treated with
horse-manure and lime
It is very important and you should all be told,
Fellow citizens, to pick them before they
grow too old.

By looking up at that noble ball known as
the sun,
Warming us up at Greenwich Mean Time
half past one,
Our Nation's Scientists can truthfully aver
That it is going to set, whatever may be the
time of the year.

Also consider, gentlemen, the truest word
I ever spoke
Is that tossing the caber with a hernia
is no joke.
For Highland Games and other things you
must be young
For that makes you healthy in kidney and
also in lung.

So when you see a beautiful woman,
indigent or rich,
Let the marriage celebrations proceed
without a hitch.
For if you do not follow the natural instincts
of a rabbit
I must earnestly warn you that you will
eventually lose the habit.
LAURENCE FOWLER

Oh! if by any unfortunate chance I should
happen to die,
In a French field of turnips or radishes I'll lie.
But thinking of it as really Scottish all the time
Because my patriotic body will impart
goodness to the slime.
For I've been brought up by the bonnie
country of Scotland
Which I like very much indeed with its lochs
and its plots of land
And many other picturesque sites which any
tourist can see
So long as he is able to pay British Rail
the requisite fee.

And you might give a thought too to my
decomposing body
As it lies, poor dead thing, under the
frog soddy.
For it will be thinking too of my very nice
home country
And its weather which is anything but sultry,
And all the exceedingly jocund times I
enjoyed there
And frolicked when I was able to in the
soggy Scottish air.
J. Y. WATSON

Much have I travelled in East Lothian
and Dundee,
Many fine buildings and bridges for to see.
I have even journeyed as far as Arran,
Though sad to say it is rather barren.

Frequently of another expanse had I been told,
Described by Homer, the Greek writer of old.
But only when I read Mr Chapman's translation
Did I have a very strong sensation.

An amateur astronomer was what I felt like,
When he sees a new planet or comet late
at night;
Or a fat Spaniard who is to become
quite famous,
Looking at the sea and wondering what
its name is.
W. S. BROWNLIE

O, what can be the matter with thee,
Knight-at-arms,
Alone, loitering and with a very pale face.
The sedge has withered as it will do in winter
And no birds at all sing about the place.

O, perhaps you have a chill, Knight-at-arms,
Your eyes are red and your nostrils dripping?
The squirrel's filled his little tree larder
And you look as if into a depression you
were slipping.

Your brow is as white as a lily,
Sprouting with sweat drops like dew;
And your cheeks which were as ruddy as
a pillar box
Are becoming as white as a lily too.

I met a lady in the meadow behind
the allotments,
As pretty as any actress on the stage;
And that is why I stand about here with
my nostrils streaming,
Looking twice my age.
T. GRIFFITHS

Do not go gentle into Death's esteemed vale,
Elderly persons should try to hang on when
the body starts to fail;
Though, of course, one day it naturally
transpires,
That everyone's membership of the human
race expires.
And even if life wasn't spent in clover,
When the finger points – I'm afraid it's over.
Then the fun-lover sees his wasted chances –
And wishes he'd kept away from dances;
Or the sober man whose books were his
treasures,
Finds his thoughts turning to coarser pleasures.
And you, Father, on the very brink as it were,
Where the word must seem little more
than a blur,
Can still get angry and show real fight –
e.g. your rage when I switched off the light!
TIM HOPKINS

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Tony Miles

Chess

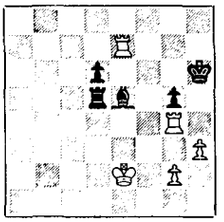
No 77 Yugoslav Super-tournament

Until very recently the composition of most international tournaments was much alike. There would be a small number of strong grandmasters, a large number of weaker GMs and IMs and some local players. Lately, and particularly in certain countries, organisers have become more ambitious, and there has been great rivalry between tournaments. This rivalry has now begun to give birth to a number of 'super-tournaments' where even the weakest players are relatively strong GMs. The latest of these 'super-tournaments' was held in the small Yugoslav town of Bugojno. Karpov and Spassky shared first place. Karpov took the early lead, but then suffered a rare defeat at the hands of Timman. For some rounds thereafter his play seemed remarkably disinterested and he appeared to be completely out of contention for first place. However, a strong finish of 5/6 brought him up to his customary position. Spassky, on the other hand, suffered his only defeat in the first round, but then played with great assurance and quickly moved through the field. It is pleasant to see that his match with Korchnoy has had no lasting ill effects.

Karpov's first loss for seven months:

White: J. Timman Black: A. Karpov

1. P-QB4, P-K3; 2. N-QB3, P-Q4. Unusual. Karpov usually plays 2. . . .N-KB3. Since he seems unfamiliar with the Queen's Gambit that ensues, perhaps he wanted to avoid disclosing anything that might arise in his match with Korchnoy. **3. P-Q4, B-K2; 4. P x P, P x P; 5. B-B4, N-KB3; 6. P-K3, 0-0; 7. Q-B2, P-B3; 8. B-Q3, R-K1; 9. N-B3, QN-Q2; 10. 0-0-0, N-B1; 11. P-KR3, B-K3.** Black has stumbled into a line that is known to favour white, and he is even a tempo down on that as white normally plays B-KN5 before B-B4. **12. K-N1, R-B1; 13. N-KN5, P-N4; 14. B-K5, P-KR3; 15. N x B, N x N; 16. P-KN4, N-Q2; 17. P-KR4, P-N5; 18. N-K2, B x P.** Probably the best practical chance, but Karpov was already running short of time which is almost unheard of. **19. P-B4, P-QB4; 20. B-R6, B-K2; 21. B x R, Q x B; 22. N-N3, P-B3; 23. R x P! N(K3)-B1; 24. R-R3! P-B5; 25. N-B5, P x B; 26. BP x P, Q-B3; 27. R(1)-R1, N-N3; 28. N-Q6** (28. N x NP! is a quicker win) **N(Q2)-B1; 29. N x R, Q x N; 30. R-R5, Q-B3; 31. Q-B5, P-R4; 32. P-K6, Q x P; 33. Q x P, P-R5; 34. R-QB1, P-B6; 35. P x P, P x P; 36. R x P, Q x Q; 37. R x Q, N-K3; 38. K-B2, K-B2; 39. R-R5, N-N4; 40. R-B6, N-K5; 41. R x P, N-B3; 42. R-R7, N-Q4; 43. R x N, K x R; 44. P-K4, N-N5ch; 45. K-N3, B-B1; 46. R-N7. Resigns.**



Problem 77

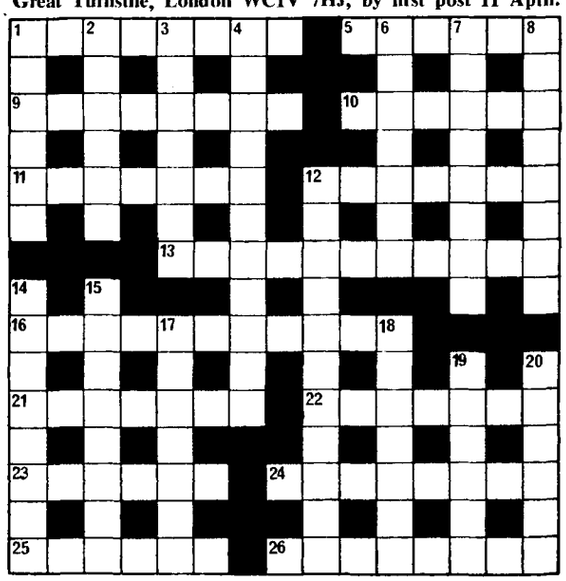
White to play. How should the game go? Entries to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 12 April.

Solution to Problem 75

1. . . .N-B6ch! (the only move) 2. Q x N! (not 2. K-N2? N-K4; 3. P-R7, K-N2; 4. P-R8=Qch, K x Q; 5. Q-R4ch, K-N2; 6. Q-R7ch, K-B1; 7. Q-R8ch, K-K2; 8. Q-K8ch, K-Q3; 9. Q-B8ch. K x P; 10. B-B7ch, K-Q5; 11. Q-Q8ch, K-B6! 12. B x P, N-N5! drawing) P-R8=Q; 3. P-R7, P-B4 (If K-N2 4. P-R8=Qch mates) 4. Q x Pch, K-K2; 5. Q-B7ch, K-Q1; 6. P-Q6! and white wins.

Weekend Crossword 1257

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1257, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 11 April.



ACROSS

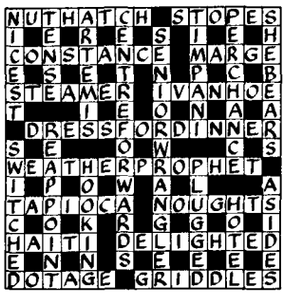
1. Spoil serious-minded nobleman (8).
5. One who declares currency? (6).
9. There is danger in swift preparation of medicines (8).
10. Mama is turned into something unwholesome (6).
11. Ancient city in part of Africa is not man-made (7).
12. Show enthusiasm about return of a relative, although not so dear (7).
13. Perform it in southern stories found in caves (11).
16. Fondly assuming responsibilities one at a time (11).
21. Without us the film would be grim (7).
22. Cliff siren (7).
23. Fools make points about one behind one (6).
24. Ned is let free although engaged (8).
25. Taking the pledge with a joke about drink (6).
26. Theory about different line on map (8).

DOWN

1. 'The —— owl does to the moon complain' (Gray) (6).
2. Dishes made in kilns beside the river (6).
3. Words about currency (7).
4. Swaying movement which makes one sick during a holiday (11).
6. Weapon for finding a fish in a river (7).
7. If the children left, the drunkards would take a steamship on the river (8).
8. Once more take a back seat (8).
12. Children taken in by a very good person at heart (11).
14. Looking threatening, the weapon is about to subdue (8).
15. Having an accident because part of the body is caught in the rock (8).
17. There is little in a gun to give one a pleasant taste (7).
18. Civil war partisan who seems to say you are shown affection (7).
19. Cover up for a man after blood (6).
20. Judgment for a comedian (6).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1256


NUTHATCH STOPES
I E R E S I E H
CONSTANCE MARGE
E S E T N P C B
STEAMER IVANHOE
T I E O N A A
DRESSFORDINNER
S E O W C S
WEATHERPROPHET
I P O W A L A
TAPIOCA NOUGHTS
C O K R G O I
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DOTAGE GRIDDLES

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Continued from page 448

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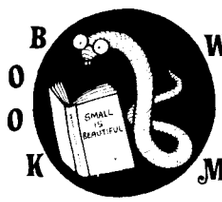

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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE (Royal Shakespeare Company) 836 6404. Recorded booking info 836 5332. *New London season of* Shakespeare's 'Henry V' and 'Henry VI' plays opens this week. See daily press for dates and times. RSC's Warehouse season, opens next week Paul Thompson's, 'The Lorenzaccio Story', Strindberg's 'The Dance of Death', John Ford's "'Tis Pity She's a Whore' in repertoire. RSC also at the Piccadilly Theatre in Peter Nichol's 'Privates on Parade'.

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'ZIONIST OPPRESSION of Oriental Jews (Sephardim) in Israel.' Speaker Robin Ezra (Israeli lecturer). Sunday 2 April, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1, 2 p.m. London Area British Anti-Zionist Organisation (BAZO), 58 Old Brompton Rd, London SW7.

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'WHERE IS HUMANISM GOING?' by James Hemming. London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terr., W8. Sun. 2 April 7.30 p.m. Adm. 30p.

FOCUS GROUP. Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Ave, WC2, on 5 April at 6.30 p.m. A talk by Clyde Sanger, Director of Information, Commonwealth Secretariat, entitled 'Still Half A Loaf — Canada's Semi-role in Aid & Development'. Admission 30p for non-RCS members.

FOCUS GROUP. Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Ave, London WC2, on 13 April at 6.30 p.m. A talk by David Lane, Chairman, Commission for Racial Equality, entitled 'Race Relations: Progress & Prospects'. Admission 30p for non-RCS members.

SERVICE CHARGES: BLOCKS OF FLATS. Private Tenants Policy Workshop|Recognised Lobby, Thurs. 6 April, 6.30-8.30 p.m. Arts Theatre Club (opp. Leicester Sq. tube) WC2. Conference of Private Residents Associations (COPRA), 15 Cecil Mansions, Marius Rd, SW17.

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